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Soul Market  
Olive Christian Malvery

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# THE SOUL MARKET





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*Photo by Charles Sweet, Rothesay, N.B.*

OLIVE CHRISTIAN MALVERY (MRS. ARCHIBALD MACKIRDY).

# THE SOUL MARKET

WITH WHICH IS INCLUDED

“THE HEART OF THINGS”

BY

OLIVE CHRISTIAN MALVERY

(MRS. ARCHIBALD MACKIRDY)

LONDON

HUTCHINSON & CO.

PATERNOSTER ROW

1906



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## INTRODUCTION

THESE are prodigal days. The summer fields are not more thickly strewn with buttercups than the world with genius. During the last three seasons the newspapers have chronicled seventy-three new musical geniuses. There is no child who scrapes the fiddle in public, or thumps a piano on a platform, who is not a genius, provided his "backers" have money enough to pay for the reputation. Every man who is insolent enough to bully his fellow-creatures is a Political Power; every woman who can entice a crowd into her house is a Social Leader; every musical or other public entertainer, if *risque* enough to secure extensive free advertising, is an Artiste. There is an unwritten tradition in these matters which is handed down from class to class, and generation to generation, and on this foundation have been compiled many Guide-Books of life, more or less alike, which are unfailing indexes to life and thought in this country. The female villain must have red hair and baleful eyes. The male villain is dark and

## Introduction

handsome—this is an unwritten law. Every duchess is beautiful and a gambler, every smart woman immoral, every Churchman a ritualist in disguise, every Nonconformist pure in heart. All British workmen are sons of toil and industrious; all capitalists are blood-suckers, and dukes are very wicked. The exploited poor are always deserving. One might continue quoting from this illuminating Guide till no avenue of thought or work remained unexplored.

To write about a country and its people now, it is only necessary to travel in such a country for three weeks. During that time one may write articles enough to pay all travelling expenses, and the book that comes thereafter—an authoritative history of the country—should be clear profit. If you wish to become a society novelist, there is no other qualification necessary than complete ignorance of society.

Suppose, however, that you are cursed with a vulgar curiosity to find out things for yourself, what happens then? Well, you must leave your motor car and strike out across the fields and ditches. You must go up narrow and unpaved ways, and you will find things of which the pretty little Guide has given you no account whatever. Then you throw away your book in disgust, and wander alone till you get lost in the most hopeless labyrinth of strange and unknown ways; and you will be lost for ever unless a merciful Providence and strong common-sense helps you to disentangle the crooked paths and set you in a straight way. Of course, if anyone chooses to forsake elected methods—to find out things for himself, to deal with

matters in a way that is not orthodox—he must expect numbers of excellent people to be scandalised. Suppose, for instance, one were to throw aside one's identity and obtain a "job" with other hand-to-mouth workers in a meat-packing factory, and found there putrid animal matter being concocted, with the ingenuity worthy of a better object, into savouries, potted meats, and various canned delicacies, how dreadfully shocked one would be. This sort of crime, the Social A. B. C. says, is only committed by the wicked American Beef Trust.

Then suppose, because of having a tiny capital to invest, a person comes to take a keen interest in commercial and financial matters, and follows with intelligent reasoning the fluctuations in the Stock Market ; and at the same time, having some property at stake, and also possessing some small instinct of citizenship, this person begins to study, and inquire closely concerning political matters, would it be possible to conceive the horror with which such an one would accept the discovery that the Chinese Labour Question in Africa was really a sort of foraging tiger owned by certain gentlemen who, on occasions when their financial affairs were not altogether prospering, let this animal loose on the public to bring them meat? The astonished victim would at once cry out : "This is not fair. Such things are only done in America by wicked trust magnates, my Social A. B. C. tells me so, and says : ' Nobody in this country has a license to rob the public. ' " Yet if one goes along in the byways, one stumbles upon many strange discoveries, and even the matter of writing a book becomes so

difficult that it takes years of living and thinking before it is possible to venture on such an undertaking. It has taken me eight years of life in England, varied with considerable travel in America and Europe, to gain even a passing glimpse of affairs as they are. The work and study of my whole life have gone to make up these pages, and it would require twenty such lives as mine, and capacity ten thousandfold greater, to make a book that is at all worthy of the subjects that are herein touched on in a humble and very imperfect manner.

There are so many worlds ! To an ardent young student working at art or music, there is no other world but that into which he finds himself plunged. To the society woman, there is no world beyond the circle of wealth. To the city man, the world is concentrated into his own office. And yet there are a hundred other worlds of which one may never have any knowledge unless Fate or circumstances chance to open the gates thereof.

A journey into some of these unknown lands brings revelations stranger than those which came to St. John at Patmos, and one wakens up to the Guide life, either broken-hearted and despairing, or refreshed and made strong with the Divine passion for Justice and Truth. The one who wakes thus will be eager to travel the world around, to enlist recruits to the new citizenship under the banner of Truth. This call may be heeded by some, but most people, if they give the Banner-Bearer a thought at all, will only call him a fool for his pains, and say that as the world has got on very well for nineteen

centuries it is likely to get on all right for a little longer. Of this, the "fool" will take no heed, for he will know in his heart that the world must tend towards better ideals and better life, or the end will be shameful.

To those who still have faith in humanity and a belief in God, this book is dedicated.





## CHAPTER I

### THE FIRST VIEW OF LONDON—STUDENT DAYS—MUSIC FOR ROYALTY—ONE OF "THE MILLION"

I AM sitting at a window of my London flat, looking out upon a street of brick buildings. A Board school is at one end, and a barrel-organ discourses music that is not sweet at the other. Between these two delectable points a constant stream of carmen's vans and milk-carts run. Errand boys pass by the score, whistling snatches of music-hall ditties. There is no green or beautiful thing within view. In this unquiet place there is found neither peace nor rest, but only a sense of constant movement and sound. Yet here we are, with several hundred other folks as foolish as ourselves, located in one of those hideous blocks of flats which, by a travesty of terms, people call "home." For these cramped and unrestful places, with the heavy smell of London always about us, we pay rents which in three years' time would buy outright some charming country place which would make a true and comfortable home. It is not till the years have taught us experience that we realise how foolishly we live, and what contemptible slaves we are to fashion. Nevertheless, to all of us who have made London our abiding-place, there is in this relentless and cruel city a weird and inexplicable fascination binding us with bands so strong that, in breaking them, we would sever some of our heart-strings.

To this dull town there come pilgrims from all parts of the universe, some to move on at the word of the policeman Circumstance, some to stay.

Sitting here, confronted with the burden of a contract which binds me to deliver a book I have promised to make into the publisher's hands by a specified time, my thoughts turn involuntarily to other days and other lands, where there is neither rush nor hurry, and where life, seen at this distance, takes on many attractions, though at the time it appeared uneventful enough. I grow despairing when I think that in one little book must be told the story of a life that has taken twenty years to live. Which of all the events shall I choose, and which leave out? How will it be possible to make anything like a consecutive narrative of things that have befallen, when there are thousands of miles to bring within a narrow compass, and a hundred lives from which to create but one?

This is my first book, and the advice I have received concerning the writing of it would in itself amount to an interesting volume. My friends are as eager as I am that it should be well done and a success. One says to me: "Adopt a staid and literary manner;" another advises a colloquial and journalistic style, with a view to rendering it easy for newspapers to quote a paragraph from any page. An ardent socialist friend urges me to paint in the darkest shades, blotting out the light, for he is sure there is too much levity about serious things in these days. Another bids me write in an artless fashion, with a fairy touch, saying people nowadays have no time to read heavy books. So here I sit, puzzled amidst the wealth of counsel delivered to me, till at last, in despair, I elect to do what I have done almost all my life—receive everybody's advice thankfully, and do what my own conscience bids me do. It would

have been easier to write this book impersonally as a story. Had the author of "The Jungle" written his book as a personal experience, he would probably by this time have been languishing in an American prison. He was wise when he gave the world a book in which he could mingle facts with fancy and step out from the fire of criticism unscathed himself.

But I have to write of things as I had personal knowledge of them. The stories and events here written are all true. The only difference I have made between actual happenings and the recording thereof lies in the fact that I have changed localities and names, so as to avoid unpleasant consequences to individuals while trying to serve the majority. And the incidents are narrated, as the story demands, with a view to continuity, instead of in the irregular fashion in which they occurred.

I began student life in India hoping to qualify for a university degree, and towards this end I studied for the matriculation—or, as it is called in India, the Entrance Examination—to an Indian university. The studies were conducted under circumstances that seem almost play, when compared with the heart and blood studies of life that I have since made. There were gardens and flowers and care-free days. Later it was discovered that I had a voice, and it was urgently advised by those who understood these matters, that I should be sent to England to train as a public singer. A friend who loved me, and believed that I really possessed the gift of a beautiful voice, was instrumental in helping me to accomplish the desire of my heart—which was to study in England. So I left my native country, and crossed the seas to what was, for me, a foreign land.

I came with an humble heart and absolute faith in everything that was English. On crossing over from France and

## The Soul Market

entering the train that was to bear me to London, my heart began to beat so fast that I felt choking, and having a carriage to myself, I stood at the window all the way from Newhaven to London. The guard was extremely kind, and came to speak to me at every stopping-place. I asked him as a particular favour to tell me the very instant London was reached. Presently the train slowed down, and we began passing over what seemed to me a black-looking wilderness, strewn with disused flower-pots of strange shapes—I had never seen an English chimney-pot in my life, and when confronted with miles of them for the first time, I was absolutely puzzled to know what they were. It was growing dark, and was very cold when we reached London Bridge. The guard came to my carriage door and said: "This is London, miss." My heart sank like lead. This London! This horrible, black place, the city of a thousand dreams! A place I had thought of almost night and day while travelling 8,000 miles to reach it! I had, however, to travel to a little place in Kent, and I shall never, all my life, cease to be grateful for the welcome I received on arriving at my destination. I was a stranger, alone, very young, very inexperienced, and already more than half disappointed. Three days after, I was enrolled as a student at the Royal College of Music. Sir Hubert Parry, the most genial, accomplished, and charming of directors, met me himself and took me into a practice-room, and asked me what I could do.

I said: "Nothing."

He said: "Will you sing something for me?"

I felt I could not sing a note to save my life. However, he played a scale on the piano, and asked me to sing the notes for him. I did so, and after several other exercises he said;



“You have a singing mouth and a musical voice ; we must see what we can make of you.”

He took me to Mr. Henry Blower, whom I came later to know and love for his many kindnesses to me. The director said :

“I have brought you a little girl who has come thousands of miles to us ; you must take care of her.”

Mr. Blower heard me sing, and said he thought my voice had the same peculiar *timbre* as that of Madam Alice Gomez.

There were several other students in the room at the time I was introduced, and I remember well sitting in a chair by the fire, with a big furry cloak on, feeling, and no doubt looking, the picture of abject misery. Students, however, of whatever class, are, I think, the most kindly and friendly people on the face of the earth. Since those days, which seem so far off, I have met university students, science students, students of arts, students of literature, students training for almost every imaginable profession, and I have found them as a class most delightful people to live among, and to deal with.

There were nearly 500 students in the Royal College of Music when I entered. Some have since made great successes in their profession. Across the road, opposite the College, stood Alexandra House, the students' hostelry, which has always been a place of particular interest to Her Majesty the Queen, who honours it every year with a visit. Indeed, His Majesty the King, when Prince of Wales, and the Queen were both intimately associated with the Royal College and Alexandra House, and it is to their gracious interest that both these places owe the splendid position they hold in the musical world. The Royal College has come to be regarded as one of the most excellent schools in the world for musical training. Students come there from every part of the

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universe, and the professorial staff is composed of the most brilliant teachers, drawn from the musical centres of Europe.

Attached to the College is the splendid Concert Hall in which are held the students' concerts, which are sometimes patronised by Royalty. Sir Hubert Parry himself gave the beautiful organ for this hall, and there is a splendid platform on which the students may practise. In this hall on two afternoons of every week may be heard some of the most delightful music that it is possible to hear in London. The students' orchestra, under Sir Villiers Stanford, practises one afternoon. Each of the players is a young and enthusiastic student, who is studying as a professional soloist. On another afternoon in each week the Choral Class assembles for practice under Sir Walter Parratt, who is the King's Master of Music and organist at the Chapel Royal, Windsor, a most remarkable and accomplished man. Sir Walter Parratt has the reputation of being able to play a fugue from Bach, a game of chess, and give an organ lesson at one and the same time, and woe betide the scholar who slurs a note or plays a wrong one! As a choral trainer Sir Walter is admirable. He has a brilliant turn of wit, and the knack of inspiring each of his students to do his or her best. On some occasions Sir Hubert Parry himself conducts the singing. It can, of course, be understood how eager every student of singing is to be admitted into the Choral Class, for the privilege attached to this class is, that conditionally upon a certain number of attendances having been put in, the student is given an opportunity of singing in the class at the State Concerts at Buckingham Palace. On these occasions the girls are all required to dress in white. They receive a guinea each, and a supper is provided at the Palace. They sit on the

platform, and have an opportunity of watching the most brilliant audience in the world assemble, and of paying vocal homage to the most beloved of reigning sovereigns.

While I was at the College, there came to the students one of those dearly prized opportunities of singing for the Queen. It was almost the last public appearance of Queen Victoria. She came to lay the foundation-stone of the South Kensington School of Art—though I am not absolutely certain which of the group of buildings it was. The thing, however, that no student would ever forget, was that the Queen specially requested that the College Choral Class should sing for her on that occasion. The students were almost wild with loyalty and delight. By the Queen's desire, the girls all wore pure white dresses, with no colours whatever. Among the class were Miss Agnes Nicholls, Mr. Ivor Foster, and many who since then have become known to the public as first-rate artistes.

Sir Hubert Parry stood in front of us, a charming and courtly figure, and before the Queen's carriage arrived, he said eagerly: "Now mind you all do your best"—and I think we did, for the little lady in black, who sat propped up in her carriage on a cushion, bowed and smiled repeatedly, and thanked Sir Hubert for the pleasure his students' singing had given her. The Prince of Wales, now our King, read the Welcome Speech to the Queen, and in answer, she spoke so loudly and so clearly that her words were heard quite distinctly by us all.

It was the last time I saw the Queen. Soon after came our last opportunity to do her reverence, and I, with many other students, waited sorrowfully for "the passing of the Great Queen." From a window in Victoria Street, we saw her borne through the thousands of silent, mourning people, to

her last resting-place. Some of us had risen at three o'clock that morning to find our places there to wait, that we might add our tribute of devotion.

During my early days at College I saw, of course, chiefly the bright side of life. Those days were certainly some of the happiest I have had in my life. I was able to practise six hours a day—with regulated intervals, of course—and each day seemed to bring some new and delightful knowledge. I lived for a time with another student in lodgings near Sloane Square, and several times during my first summer in London, we walked at four o'clock in the morning to Covent Garden to see the flowers and fruit. On these occasions we returned with baskets full of flowers which we purchased for a few pennies. In any London shop these same blossoms would have cost many shillings; but we did not look like American sight-seers; so at Covent Garden we bought them cheaply. It must be remarked that Americans are always considered fair prey. Special prices are made for them everywhere in London. On one occasion a very amusing incident happened. The girl who was living with me was very much attracted by some extraordinary-looking lilies, which were displayed by an old woman whom I have since come to know as a typical Covent Garden "hand." Being extremely fond of flowers, and having spent my childhood among the most rare and lovely flowers, I have what a country friend of mine calls a "sense" for them. The appearance of these lilies struck me as being extremely odd, and looking down at them closely, I asked the old lady if they were painted.

"Painted!" she said disgustedly. "O' course not! they grows like that there."

My companion insisted on buying some.

"Don't," I said. "Can't you smell the paint?" There



was a big dash of green in the centre of each white lily.

"Nonsense!" said my companion, "of course they are not painted."

She bought a bunch of the lilies for sixpence, and stuck her nose into one to inhale the scent; when she withdrew it, a brilliant spot of green adorned the organ. The more she rubbed with her handkerchief, the more the paint seemed to settle into her nose. It was oil-paint, and I laughed myself nearly into hysterics over her plight. Even the policemen, as we passed them, had sympathetic jokes to make on my companion's appearance.

In those days I had no personal knowledge of the life of the people in and about Covent Garden, and it was not till I had been in England some months that I became acquainted with parts of the world outside the charmed musical circle, although I had always been interested in the poor, and had helped to collect money for Dr. Barnardo's Homes when I was a child in India.

One late autumn evening, on my way home from the College, a poorly-clad woman, with a child in her arms, followed me for a little way, begging that I would buy some flowers she had. I told her I did not want the flowers, but she still followed me, and when I turned to speak to her, I saw that she looked very thin and miserable. She noticed that I hesitated and tears filled her eyes.

"I have not taken a penny to-day, miss," she said. "Buy 'em, and you won't regret it."

The flowers were quite wilted, and as I had been most seriously warned never to give money in the streets, or to believe stories told to me by such people, I refused to buy the flowers.

"Indeed," I said again, "I don't want them," and walked

quickly away. But I had not gone more than a few yards when a horrible feeling came over me. I was hurrying home to a comfortable, warm room and good food, and here was a poor creature, with a little child, out in the wet streets. I turned back and joined the woman. After walking along with her for some way, and hearing her story, I said to her: "If you care to come with me to my rooms, I will give you some tea for yourself and some milk for the child, and then I would like to go with you to your lodgings and see if what you tell me is true."

"It ain't the kind of place that's fit for you to see, miss," she said reluctantly.

"Oh! that doesn't matter at all," I argued. "I shall be quite ready to go if you will take me."

I decided that if the woman's distress was as genuine as she said it was, she would not object to come to my lodgings and wait till I was ready to accompany her to her place later on. She followed me to my room, where I changed my dress for an old one, and leaving my watch and rings there, we set out for the woman's home. We walked westward again. I did not at that time know the locality, and could not have found my way alone. From the outskirts of a well-to-do neighbourhood, we plunged suddenly into a vile and narrow street, where the gutters were thick with refuse. Into a house opening on to this lane, the woman led me. We stumbled up some dark and rickety stairs to the fourth storey, where, in a miserable little room I found, lying on the floor on a heap of rags, a man who, as far as I could judge, seemed dying.

Looking back through the years at my first introduction to London's ugly places, I always feel glad of the prompting that took me back to that poor woman. Many a time and often, since then, I have been deceived and cheated by clever liars. But from what I know of the lives of the poor, I would rather



*Photo by Hana, Ltd., Bedford Street, Strand.*

MISS MALVERY AS A FLOWER-GIRL.



STARTING OFF ON AN ORGAN-GRINDING EXPEDITION.



have it so, than labour under the burden of passing a starving woman and a suffering, dying child in the streets, having myself a home and food, and all things necessary to make life livable.

There was nothing in this miserable room save a tiny saucepan on an empty stove. There was no fire, no warmth or light, and no furniture. Not a quarter of a mile away were streets of splendid houses, whose waste would have kept many such a family as this. After this experience, when an invitation came to me from a friend who was much interested in a club for girls at Lambeth, to help her occasionally by singing for them, I complied with the request willingly, and so began my first introduction to a class of people whom, since those days, I have come to know exceedingly well. Later, to my infinite good, I gained the friendship of Mrs. Rae, President of the Girls' Guild of Good Life at Hoxton. This friendship, and the memory of one other most precious, have inspired the humble efforts I have since made to "pass on my blessings."

Many and varied were the concerts and entertainments the students from the Royal College assisted at, in and about London. My experience of professional musicians and entertainers is, that they are most generous in giving their services and time for those less fortunate than themselves. Indeed, so greatly has this characteristic been traded on by society ladies and philanthropic institutions in London and elsewhere, that it has become a matter of extreme difficulty for a young student, who has spent many years and large sums of money in acquiring good training as a musician, to obtain any remuneration for such services. During the last five years I have had several thousand requests to appear at various charity concerts, entertainments, and bazaars in every part of the kingdom. These philanthropic displays cost the organisers nothing. Every artiste of any standing is pressed to

render free service on these occasions. Tradesmen are almost compelled to contribute goods in kind, and the only people who contribute nothing except their time, which is really of no value, are those who receive the public thanks for their large generosity and untiring zeal in "giving" so much for charity. The "giving" is done by those who hardly receive even a word of acknowledgment.

It was quite by accident that I became a public reciter instead of a singer. I studied elocution at the College, for the purpose of obtaining a clear enunciation. At this time I was also studying English Literature with a well-known Oxford scholar, and I wrote two descriptive poems which I called "Indian Pictures." My tutor was so pleased with these that he advised me to have them set to music as a "scena" for solo and orchestra. The late Mr. W. Y. Hurlstone undertook to set these poems to music. Instead, however, of setting them for orchestra, he set them for recitation, and, with no idea of doing them in public myself, I recited them over and over for him as he played the music. That year, however, I was invited to recite one of my own poems at a concert at a Literary Institute. Mr. Hurlstone accompanied me, playing his own music. We had a splendid reception. The London Press gave us generous praise. Even the *Times* said kind things of the performance, and we felt supremely happy. Circumstances compelled me shortly after to begin work immediately, and I taught and studied at the same time. Fortunately I loved teaching. When a tiny child, I accompanied my grandmother, who had at one time thirty schools for girls and women in her charge in India. I had a wooden slate and reed pen, and often taught quite old women to make their letters. My grandmother was a very accomplished woman and a fine reader. She used to make me stand at one end of the long verandah of our house, while she

sat at the other end and listened to me, as I read aloud passages from newspapers, poetry, or choice literature. I learned in this way to use my voice naturally and well.

It was an extremely providential thing for me that I became known as a teacher. I obtained a visiting "lectureship" at a Girls' College where I had an elocution class—and gradually I had quite a number of pupils. Two members of Parliament, one well-known barrister, and several clergymen came to me with recommendations from friends. The work was a constant delight to me, and I have had reason to be very proud of some of my pupils.

As soon as I had obtained a few professional successes and gained some friends, I found myself invited out very often, and from quite the first days of my career I might have employed myself every day in the week during the season at some "At Home" or Charity Function. A few experiences, however, of such things satisfied me that there was nothing to gain from them. The favour of society is fickle. I saw one after another of society entertainers "taken up" and flung aside for the next craze.

One lady I was introduced to as being very philanthropic and a great worker for charity, added some £300 a year to her income by this means. The way I first discovered this ingenious method of acquiring money was when she asked me to assist her in organising a big charity concert. I did almost all the drudgery—persuaded several well-known artistes to give their services, and sold £75 worth of tickets. The concert was a great success, and the hall was well filled. To my astonishment, when the receipts were declared the charity got £37. The lady paid for her charming dress, several lunches and dinner-parties, and various other "extras" out of the proceeds of the concert, reckoning them as legitimate expenses.

I had another experience of a charity function—a bazaar—where I found the Secretary had all her confectionery and grocery provided for her for over a month from the bazaar stores. After this I resolved I would never assist at a charity function of any sort unless I knew the promoters intimately, and was personally interested in the charity.

Britain gives more in charity yearly than any other nation. Her charity is the most costly and badly managed of any. There are hundreds of people employed to-day in London alone, in collecting and distributing charity. If a central office were established, presided over by responsible Government-paid officers, a vast amount of real good might be effected at a small cost.

It is always, of course, on poor entertainers the heaviest burdens of these charity entertainments fall. One agent in London who “manages” numbers of these functions makes every unknown artiste who wants to appear, pay him £10 for the “introduction.” This money, of course, does not go to the charity.

I have often wondered whether it would not be possible to insist on a Government license for all charity functions, a statement of receipts and expenses being made to special authorities in charge of such a department, created for the protection of the public. In the matter of these and similar performances, I would always say to young beginners, “Don’t give your services to great ladies for an ‘introduction,’ unless you are quite sure that you are to get paid work from such an introduction, and never give money to an agent for the purpose of obtaining a public appearance. No appearance paid for in this way is worth making.”

Two friends of my own, girls who could ill afford any outlay of capital, paid two different men—musical agents in London—the sum of £30 each for an appearance, one at



Queen's Hall, and one at a fashionable charity concert at one of the Ducal houses. In the first case, the concert programme was made up of unknown people, and the audience composed of their friends, and the Press conspicuous by its absence. In the second case, the girl came in last on a programme which was contributed to by some of the most brilliant artistes of the day. Nobody waited to hear her. I have known other cases in which money has been paid on one pretext or another, to agents who have never troubled in any way to fulfil the promises made. There is one agent now in London, who once had £10 from me; the one and only time I have ever had such a transaction with an agent. This money was paid in advance, for printing and other expenses, of a concert he was to manage for me. He appeared to have but little credit, and was unable to sell a single ticket. It was the only concert I have ever had which was, from every point of view, a failure. It cost me about £30, and this because, instead of managing the affair myself, or trusting it to a well-known and experienced agent, many of whom I know well, I was over-persuaded by an enthusiastic friend to leave the matter in this man's hands. He is living now in comfortable style, with a town and country house. Many poor beginners pay him sums of money for appearances at his club, and other places, which do them no good whatever.

In the matter of appearing at society "At Homes," most young artistes, if they are attractive enough, will always find, for a year or two, society ladies who will "take them up," give them a tea or dinner, and take their services, which have cost them years of work and an outlay of considerable capital to acquire. But at the end of the time they would find themselves, instead of being popular and in demand, worn out, despised, and cast aside for the first new-comer who created

## The Soul Market

some sensation in the entertaining world. Except in some rare cases where the appearance might be before Royalty, or well-known patrons of art, there is not only no advantage, but positive harm to a student in allowing fashionable women to entertain their friends at the cost of giving to the artiste a half-crown tea. There are little incidental expenses to be paid for, such as cabs, shoes, gloves, etc., and the student had much better keep her money, and have a fourpenny tea in an A.B.C. shop.

Lately I had an invitation from a woman who entertains a great deal in London. She was giving a large garden-party at her country place, and generously invited me, saying how charmed she would be to have a few recitations. The reward to me was to be the chance of introduction to "such useful people, some of the best in society, in fact." As there is hardly a city in this kingdom where I have not recited or spoken, I wrote and thanked this lady for her kind invitation, and said that I was not working for introductions, but that I would be delighted to recite for her at my usual fee.

This, however, may be said here. An agent can do nothing for anyone whose work is not really good, and the public are really the arbiters of an entertainer's fate, and it is by the public that an artiste must stand or fall. Once an artiste makes a public success, there is no fear that "Society" will be neglectful. Good work is a fairly reliable capital.

There came one day to the studio of a great professor with whom I was then studying, a lady and her daughter, who had travelled the world over in search of instruction. The lady was an American and well-to-do. She had spent, she told my master, £3,000 in having her daughter trained. She came to him finally for a few finishing touches and an introduction to London. The professor heard the young woman sing. She certainly showed evidences of extreme

cultivation, but her voice was small and very unattractive. The professor said: "Madam, if the masters could have made your daughter a singer she would be one of the finest in the world, but God Almighty evidently had other intentions for her. She had better take up millinery: it is an admirable outlet for feminine talent." The fury of the two ladies may be imagined. How much more they spent in the vain endeavour to foist an absolutely incompetent person on the public, we never heard, but as far as we know, the public has not proved that it was waiting to fall over them with a welcome.

The real patrons of music and art in England are "the people." Society is not really musical at all. If it were, there would not be so many starving musicians scattered about. The very rich are seldom truly artistic or musical, though there is a fashion among them of "posing" as patrons of music and art. What society runs after is the latest sensation. It rarely ever encourages unknown talent.

Every year there come to the various educational centres hundreds of enthusiastic young folk from towns and villages all over the kingdom, all hoping to be Pattis, Paderewskis, or Joachims, and only one out of several thousands succeeds in making even a living. English artistes, notwithstanding recent endeavours to cultivate British music, are not popular. Here and there one supreme genius may succeed in winning fame and success, but hundreds drop out of the ranks.

To English and American women, most foreign artistes owe their fame and their professional income. It was in Paris that I met one of these society darlings. He was drawing every year from the pockets of English and American ladies several thousands of pounds. He owed the very instrument with which he won his success to the generosity of an English friend. English and American girls

had pelted him with violets and roses; they would have lain down and allowed him to make a door-mat of them, feeling grateful for the compliment. In a Paris drawing-room where he was being *fêted* by a great company of foreigners, someone said to him:

"Ah! Monsieur, you will be marrying a rich American or a beautiful English wife."

He laughed a horrid, sneering laugh and said:

"English or American wife! No, no; don't you make any mistake: they are too cheap—too very cheap."

On one occasion, speaking to the late Mr. Vert, I asked him to explain to me the mystery of the sudden success which had overwhelmed a foreign artiste who had appeared in London for a few weeks. He said: "Oh! Mrs. So-and-So has put aside £5,000 to start him, and he will be a great success." Everyone in the musical world knows of a hundred such cases, and it is one of the most pitiful things in life to see gifted and enthusiastic young students working with heart and mind in the vain hope that their own countrymen and women will some day give them a welcome. If they were long-haired, oily, foreign, and immoral, their chances of success would be a thousand to one; but being British, and poor and clean, their chances are one to a thousand.

There died, a few months ago, in London a young English musician, who was, according to the highest and best critics of the day, a living example of the capacity and talent which is sometimes to be found in British composers. He was a senior student when I entered college, and even then his compositions and executive capacity had won for him a fair reputation. He worked almost continuously, and being of a delicate and extremely sensitive nature, his health gave way. Still for him there was no respite. He was not among the fortunate few. Although his work was beautiful and worthy



in every sense, yet it did not gain for him either standing or money among his own people. He was the only support of a widowed mother and two sisters. After years of splendid work, and the production of compositions which were admittedly the work of a God-gifted artist, he was at length elected to a professorship at the Royal College of Music. Hardly had this happened when the effects of the long strain of work and comparative hardship he had endured ended his career. He died suddenly. There were a few laudatory notices in the papers—and that was all. Yet here was a young and splendid life which might have been an ornament to this country absolutely sacrificed to the cruel and wicked fashion of crushing out everything that is British, and fostering and encouraging everything that is foreign. Of course, for the great foreign artistes who bring their beautiful gifts to share with us we can have nothing but admiration and kindness. Such gifts are not confined to particular countries or localities, and the world is ready to pay homage to them wherever they are found. For myself, I owe my introduction and success in Paris entirely to one of the greatest of living artistes—Madame Calvé. One day at lunch in a friend's house in New York, I met Calvé. As I entered the room she got up from the table and came to meet me with that charming and warm-hearted friendliness which is so characteristic of her. She is a beautiful woman, and has a lovely smile. I was completely captivated. No one, of course, in a private house would think of asking Calvé to sing, but that afternoon she said to me: "Is there anything I can do to give you pleasure? Shall I sing something for you?" And she got up, there and then, and stood by the piano, and sang three exquisite little chansonettes—Provençal songs. More lovely, spontaneous music I have never heard. Two years after, when in Paris, I sent Calvé a little note, merely stating that I was in

the city, for I did not know whether she would have time, or care to renew the acquaintance. In answer, she sent down her companion in her motor, and bade her bring me to her box at the opera. Every day after that, Calvé, or some friends to whom she introduced me, sent their carriages for me, and took me to every performance of any merit that was going on in Paris. I met some of the most charming hostesses in French and American-French society, and gave several recitals there, which the papers were kind enough to say were "triumphs of art," and these successes I owe almost entirely to Calvé and the friends I met through her. We sometimes drove along in her beautiful electric brougham into the country places, and there, in the clear air, this beautiful child of the sun would open her mouth and sing like a bird—naturally and carelessly. There are not many people, I fancy, who have had the privilege of hearing one of the world's most gifted singers trill forth lovely little songs, one after the other, in those beautiful country lanes. Calvé was going to Monte Carlo at that time to fulfil a professional engagement there, and wished to take me with her, promising to give several big concerts at which she wished me to recite. I was not able, however, to take advantage of this generous and delightful offer, for I received a commission from *Pearson's Magazine* and an American Syndicate to travel in Europe and give an account of the condition and methods of alien emigration.

Accompanied by my friends, Mr. and Mrs. Northrop, I made an extensive tour in Europe. We visited almost every European port, and going inland, made investigations as to the people's lives, and economic and social conditions. From the southern European ports we travelled northward again, and passing through Switzerland and Germany, reached the Russian frontier, but here, although I possessed private letters

from a Russian nobleman of enormous influence, a passport *viséd* by the Russian Ambassador, and another by the American Consul-General, we met with extremely rough usage. The Russians were at that time suffering from nervous prostration; they were seeing Japanese spies in the most harmless individuals, and a camera-box, to them, was most certainly a deadly instrument. It was shortly after the Russian outrage on the British fishing fleet. When we found we could get no satisfaction, we travelled towards Poland, where the insurrection was rampant. I had met several distinguished Poles in Paris, and carried with me private letters, with very minute instructions as to how and when I might deliver them without arousing the suspicions of the Russian Poles. Furthermore, I had introductions to one or two of the Russian officials, and well authenticated passports. I was able to study in their own countries the emigrants that pour like a destroying flood into Britain year by year. I think it was while living with the outcast poor as a "street musician" that I first conceived the idea of studying these.

I had seen the alien in London, I had been present, through the courtesy of officials at Ellis Island in America, at an examination of emigrants there; and once while a guest of the Republican Club at a luncheon held at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York, I heard a lecture delivered by Mr. Robinson, Superintendent of Emigration, dealing with the question of immigration as relating to the United States. Later, in a conversation with Mr. Robinson, he explained to me how advantageous it was for America to receive a large supply of emigrants, strong and stalwart, simple and decent people, drawn from the Saxon races of Europe. He pointed out how the wide plains of the Western States were waiting for cultivation, and how the right sort of immigration meant prosperity and wealth to the country. The real danger to the

United States, he said, was the never-ending stream of poverty-stricken and diseased creatures, who, in spite of the increasingly severe regulations, managed to secure an entrance into America. It struck me then, that if the Americans, with all their wealth and their almost unlimited land, could not afford to receive people of the lower emigrant classes, little England, over-populated and unable to provide food for her own people, was certainly not the country to allow indiscriminate hordes of miserable wretches, the offscourings of Europe, to invade her shores. This opinion was justified by the sojourn I made among the poor and outcast, chiefly in London, and the journey to Europe which I took, to study the immigrant "at home." But of these matters I will treat elsewhere. The musical part of this story would not be complete without an account of the adventures which befel me while making "music for the millions."



## CHAPTER II

### A "HEATHEN" AT THE OPERA—MUSIC FOR THE MILLION

DURING my student days, I attended many concerts of all descriptions, festivals in some of our northern towns, such as Leeds and York, "popular" concerts held at Queen's Hall, and like places, and those marvellous musical feasts given on special high days and holidays at such places as the Albert Hall and the People's Palace. Provided the programmes contain the names of known and loved artistes, the crowds at all these musical entertainments prove the innate love of music that "the people" have. But cheap and excellent as are the musical programmes provided in the well-known halls, there are thousands of dwellers in the poorer parts of the towns who are unable to spend even a shilling to gratify their love of sweet sounds, and it is in the poor streets, therefore—in the byways and alleys—that the peripatetic musicians and grinders of the barrel-organ find the coppers come most generously to their hands.

The interest that I took in the lives and fortunes of the poor led me to make a closer acquaintance with the makers of music for "the millions," and the place they fill in the scheme of affairs.

In looking back over events and tracing the gradual education of my senses, I am compelled to wonder at the enormous difference a few years spent in a "civilised" country makes on one's mind and manners. When I was still new to

English fashions, I was taken by friends to the opera. It was a gala performance. We had a box, and the party was a gay and fashionable one, and to me a night at the opera was quite an event. I had been to a pantomime at Drury Lane, and had enjoyed the lights and colours, though I felt rather like a lady I met at a reading given by Mark Twain in India. We had been enjoying the famous humorist's stories immensely, but as we came out regretting the end of the performance, this lady remarked: "Well, I can't see where the fun came in; I can say funnier things than that myself." So with me, I could only laugh occasionally, and wasn't educated up to the exquisite humour of the clown's falls, and the thumping of one clown by the other.

My first impressions of the opera were of this same crude kind. It was a German opera. I did not understand German, but I loved music. What was my amazement, therefore, to see a group of fat women with whitened noses come out and dance and sing. Then a very large lady, with quite a distinctive figure, came out and made impassioned sounds to carefully arranged gestures. First she put out her right arm, then her left, then held both arms out together, and lastly clasped her hands over her star-spangled bosom. All her musical phrases ended with a terrifically high note, and she got very red each time. After this there appeared from a side door a podgy man who turned out to be a great tenor. He trotted with little steps towards the lady and began to sing. As he sang they both moved apart. He also had his particular gestures. I was not educated enough to know what they meant. He began by putting his right hand on his heart, then he flung out the arm and placed his left hand on his heart; this done, the left arm was thrown out, and finally, both hands were clasped over the heart. This ending, the lady began to sing: it was a duet. They came together, the

large lady threw herself into the podgy tenor's arms, he staggered several feet, there was a great clash of instruments, a wild shriek of human voices, and a storm of applause.

"Isn't he divine?" asked my hostess. Then aside to another lady: "You know, my dear, they say she isn't—Well—"

"Oh, everyone knows that," answered the other lady crossly. "How did you enjoy it?" she asked, turning to me.

"Don't they ever tumble down?" I said disappointedly. "They do at the pantomime. That always happens at the end—doesn't it happen in the opera?"

The whole party laughed, much to my amazement. Since those callow days I have been to the opera many scores of times. But after looking at the scene and fixing the picture in my mind, I shut my eyes and listen to the music, and put the action in for myself. It saves a great deal of annoyance and nervousness, unless, indeed, it be that some singers who can act are in the cast, but this happens so rarely that it is hardly worth counting on.

Each set of people, each class, has its own peculiar ideas of pleasure, and I found among the street musicians I came to know later, styles and fashions as characteristic as those of the "stars" among musicians.

Once, "for the fun of the thing," I went out with a party of ladies and gentlemen, who, in masks and long cloaks, picnicked on the river at Henley. Every one of the party was well-born, and we were all fairly well off as regards worldly wealth, but the fun was what we wanted. We got more, however, for after paying our expenses, which included a "club" lunch, we had £13 over at the end of the second day. We were so gay and elated at our success, that we gave a sort of party for what the men called "those poor Johnnies"—the humbler strollers along the river-way, who had not

made much money through exercising their vocal or instrumental arts with untiring zeal.

I mention this "outside" experience merely to show that long before I got into actual touch with the poor wandering singers and players of our towns, I had resolved that if ever the opportunity came to me, I would find out through personal experience what claim these people have to our sympathy and toleration, and what place they fill in the myriad crannies of our hard social system.

One afternoon, while waiting at a friend's for my right-hand man, a gentleman I will call Mr. C., to come in and tell me whether he had found a factory I could enter as a worker, there came up from the street a weird sound of—singing, I suppose I must call it, for want of a more descriptive name. It really was a wheezy, broken succession of sounds, through which I distinguished a few notes and words of the well-known hymn, "Art thou Weary, art thou Languid?" It was irresistibly comic, for it ran somewhat like this: "'Hart thou . . . Hart thou . . . weary—' Thank you, miss"—and the sound of a penny on the pavement—"weery, Hart thou languid—'" The doleful dirge was broken to pick up a penny or to cough.

I said to my friend, on a sudden inspiration: "Do invite that vocalist into the kitchen; I want to ask her to let me go out with her for a little while."

Mr. C., coming in, good-naturedly went after the woman. We gave her some tea and a shilling, and she promised to come for me next day and take me out with her. We never saw her again. But we were not to be daunted. "I'll take you out myself," said Mr. C., and so we arranged to try our luck as street singers one night.

The experiment was very successful; we took a 'bus to West Kensington, and as we alighted near the station, we heard a



woman singing in one of the streets close by. Down we went after her. Mr. C. quickly got into conversation with her. He told her we also were singers, but were new to the game—"down on our luck"—"no place for the likes of us in this 'ere sphere," he said.

"True enough," the woman replied. "We ain't much count—still we manage to live."

We talked for a while, then adjourned to a coffee-shop. The woman would have preferred a "pub," but I objected, so we discussed our plans over some extremely muddy coffee.

The woman told us she had sung in the streets for five years, and afterwards I found she made it pay. She lived quite a distance off, and had her regular haunts where she went to sing. For her doleful songs and hymns sung out of tune, in gasps, she collected from sympathetic people quite a respectable sum of money daily. I asked her if she would allow me to accompany her. She looked up at me with a quick, shrewd glance.

"Do you know any 'ymns?" she asked. "'Abide with Me'?" she further questioned.

"Yes," I said, "that is a hymn I know."

"All right; we'll work that then," and after I had agreed to let her collect the money, she said: "You can come to-morrer," and told me where to meet her.

Next morning at eleven o'clock I met her, and we started off to Balham and Tooting. It tested every bit of my courage and *sang-froid* to get through that day. Street after street we traversed, keeping a sharp look-out for policemen, who could, if they wished, so my companion informed me, "put us inside"—that is, lock us up.

I doubted this, since I heard endless relays of street singers and street musicians pursuing their calling in many respectable parts of London. But later, I looked up the Act in one of the

Government Blue-Books myself, and found that singing, or making "music" in the streets, is illegal if objected to by the householders.

Nevertheless, I went out with this woman for several days, and our singing never got us into trouble. We sometimes got as much as threepence in one street, and rarely sang through a street without something being given to us: At the end of the first day we had collected no less than seven shillings and tenpence. This did not surprise my companion in the least, so it was evidently by no means a record. She informed me that on a Sunday morning or a Saturday afternoon, in a poor neighbourhood as much as ten shillings could be earned in a few hours. Of course much depends on the special knowledge of the singer. My companion seemed to know by instinct the streets to choose, and we rarely got a blank one. The street singers are called "griddlers," or "needy griddlers," which is quite a classical slang term.

I did not stay with this particular "griddling" friend long. She took all the money we earned, and every night got drunk. No persuasions could change her, so Mr. C. and I went off one day to hunt up a woman he knew of who haunted the streets round Walworth. He had tracked her by inquiries straight to the house where she lived. The dwelling was tenanted by sixteen families, though originally it had been meant for one ordinary household. Here we found our quarry—she lived in a basement room which I fancied must have originally been a store-place of some kind. The woman's husband was then "doing time," we were told, and she was making her living by singing in the streets with her three children.

I begged Mr. C. to try and get me a room in the same street, and this, after a little difficulty, he managed to do. I

soon managed to get very friendly with the children of the woman we wished to cultivate. The eldest girl was about fourteen, the next nine, and the youngest about three or four. Poor mites, they were often very hungry and cold. The mother ill-treated them, and sent them out to sing when she was too ill after a heavy bout of drinking to go out herself. I went out several times with these children, and once we got as much as three shillings. The eldest girl "prigged" one shilling, but took the other two shillings to her mother.

How they loved and clung to one another, those forlorn atoms for whom the big world had no place! They were adepts at avoiding the school inspector, and contrived to pick up food enough to keep alive. My little bare room was their Eden, and Ellen, the eldest girl, gave me strange chapters of history out of the lives of her neighbours. In the same house with them lived two "grizzlers"—men who were supposed to be respectively blind and crippled. Ellen assured me it was all "me eye," and told me a funny story of how the crippled man had chased her one day when she slyly carried off his crutch. The blind man, she said, "swore hawful," and saw "enough for three." These two rogues earned a good living from the charitable, one playing a whistle, and the other droning out hymns.

. . . . .  
The class of street beggars who make strange noises in order to call attention to their misery, as the two men I have described, are known as "grizzlers." They take up a position on the edge of a busy street, and with an old violin, or that curious instrument known as an accordion, make the air hideous with discords, in order to attract attention. From what I myself have seen, I am certain that any person who so stands in a busy market street will get more money in an hour than many a working man will earn in a whole day.

I organised, about this time, a little social club for coster lads and girls in a room I hired near Battersea. There I used to go one evening a fortnight, to tell them stories, and in other ways help them to be happy in a civilised manner for an hour or so. One foggy evening, as I was returning from our "party," I heard through the fog a sweet, fresh girl's voice singing a coon song. Crossing the road I discovered the singer to be a pleasant-faced, neatly-dressed girl of twenty. By her side there stood an elderly woman. The singer accompanied herself upon a guitar. When she had finished the song she entered the public-house outside which she had been standing, leaving the elder woman outside. In a few moments she reappeared, and handing some money to the other woman, said :

"Tenpence, mother dear."

I was very much interested in these people, and entered into conversation with them.

I learned that the young woman called herself a "chanter," and that for four years she had maintained her mother and a crippled brother by "chanting." She liked her life, and on the whole was well treated by the frequenters of the public-houses outside which she sang.

"We meet more gentlemen than cads," she said.

"Of course, that's what we might expect," said the mother, and she continued with some philosophy: "If there wasn't more gents in the world than cads, why, cads would be judges, and we would be all locked up for being good."

Before I left these people, I managed to get the girl to consent to let me accompany her on several evenings during the following week.

This I did, and my experience was utterly different to that I had with the needy griddler. I called for the girl at her home, and was shown into a tiny, but clean, neatly-arranged



room, in a respectable street near the Wandsworth Road. Sitting, propped up with pillows, on a sofa, was a white-faced youth, busily putting together a cardboard model of a church. The mother and daughter were waiting for me when I arrived. On the table I noticed books and magazines, and I also observed that flowers were arranged about the room ; in fact, the place had an air of refinement that astonished me when I remembered where I had met these people, and how they earned their living.

The girl took up her guitar, and kissing her brother, bade him good-night.

A few minutes after, this brave sister and I were standing outside a tavern. For four years this girl had been thus bread-winning in every kind of weather. Every night in the week she had her regular places to sing at—Brixton, Chelsea, Wandsworth, Battersea, Clapham Junction, Pimlico. Every night she was to be found in front of one of the taverns in these districts.

Hard-working, courageous Nellie. Surely as deserving of applause as any prima-donna, when one considers the plucky way she sang for those dear to her.

I was very pleased with my experience with Nellie and her home. I stayed with these good people for a few days, paying them a shilling a day for my board and lodging. I had a small bed in the tiny kitchen and found it warm and clean. I helped Nellie and the old mother to do the house-work and cooking, and while I was there Nellie and I went out together, the mother staying at home, greatly to her pleasure. It was Nellie who gave Mr. C. and me an informal introduction to a company of "buskers" we met one day on our rounds.

I was eager to know how the party fared, and their manner of life, so Mr. C. followed them up, and some days after came

to tell me that we had a chance of "busking"—that is, of giving a sort of variety entertainment in the streets.

I found there were many classes of these performers. As a rule they work in troupes, generally under a leader, who arranges the "pitches" and keeps the money until the end of the day, when it is shared out. My experience with a party of these people was rather amusing.

The leader, Ben, possessed a very powerful voice, of course absolutely untrained.

He also possessed ideas on art. His criticism of my own humble efforts were extremely embarrassing.

I had been introduced by Mr. C. as a young woman wishing to earn her living as a "busker."

"Chant us a lay," he said.

"I beg your pardon?"

"Sing something," exclaimed Mr. C.

Thus requested, I sang, in my best manner, a verse of "When the Swallows Homeward Fly."

"Um! fair, fair," muttered my examiner, "wants more go, though. It ain't hartistic enough neither, wants draggin' out a bit. Still I'll give her a chance if Rains turns up drunk again to-night. I'll give him the push and engage her," he said to Mr. C.

Evidently the methods of my many singing masters must have been all wrong. Here, after all my study, I was merely considered a possible stop-gap by a common street singer, who only promised to engage me in the event of one of his company not keeping sober. Nevertheless, I promised to learn a song he gave me and join him later in the day.

We met about eight o'clock that evening in a south-western suburb. We were five in number: an elderly, quiet man who played an instrument called an American organ; a pale

youth who played a violin; Ben, the leader; and Rains, a weak-looking man about thirty, very shaky and very shabby, but possessing a baritone voice of some power, and who, alas for my chances as a street singer!—to use his own description of his condition — was "painfully sober."

"Never mind, my dear; we'll work five-handed to-night," said the leader to me. "You can do the 'nobbing,'" he continued, and then he put a small box into my hand.

"Whatever does he mean?" I asked Mr. C. in an aside.

"Collect the money," he whispered.

Now I was in for it indeed. A large crowd had gathered; the organist commenced to play at the request of Ben, who had given him the cryptic order of "Set about the dominoes, Bill."

After a short overture, Ben stepped forward and announced that he was about to sing a song of his own composition, copies of which would be on sale at the price of twopence each.

The title of the song was "The Old Soldier." After he had sung this masterpiece in a voice that might be heard quite half a mile away, he fell back to my side; then, as Rains commenced to sing "I Fear no Foe," Ben muttered to me:

"Slip round, my girl, and 'nob' 'em, and mind you bring it all to light, and no weeding, no poling, mind yer, for if yer do, I'm bound to bowl yer."

This extraordinary language was afterwards interpreted by Mr. C. to me: that I was to beg from the crowd for coppers, hand all I received over to the speaker, to keep none for myself surreptitiously, because if I did he would be bound to find it out.



I passed round the crowd, who melted away as they grew aware of my presence. It was amusing to watch the disinterested air of some of the listeners who looked over my head, and passed on as though they had not noticed that there had been any singing or music whatever. Yet my box grew gradually heavier, and Ben gave quite a grunt of satisfaction when I handed its contents to him.

That the audiences appreciated good music was proved to me that evening beyond doubt. My collections were nearly twice as much each time I went round after Rains had sung. His voice was good and had been trained, and his selection of songs was good. The "hartistic hefforts" of leader Ben met with very little favour from the crowds.

Our earnings for the night amounted to no less a sum than twenty-seven shillings. It was apportioned thus: The organist received five shillings, the boy violinist three shillings, Rains six shillings; to myself was handed two shillings and sixpence, the balance being kept by Ben, to whom belonged the organ and the violin.

As we were wending our way home that night, we came upon another party of buskers, and I heard Ben accost the leader with some strange salutation, and the following conversation took place, which, bit by bit, I had translated:

"Graft good?" asked Ben.

"Rotten. Why, we've nobbed four carges and only touched for a sprarzer."

This, I was told, meant: "Is work good?"

"No, bad; I've begged at four public-houses, and only received sixpence."

We went on, and Rains, growing confidential, told us his history.

It was pathetic enough—the too common story of a wasted life. He had been, when a boy, a chorister in one of the

catbedrals, and it was there that he had obtained his musical education.

He left this choir to join a touring opera company. There he fell in love with one of the women of the company, married her, and for a few months had been happy, when one night he found himself alone ; his wife had fled. From that time he gave way to drink and dissipation, gradually sinking lower and lower, until no one could depend upon him.

As I have said, his voice was a good one, and he had an excellent knowledge of music, and sang with taste and feeling, but poor Rains was a helpless and hopeless failure.

My next initiation into the art and mystery of open-air performances was brought about by an accident.

One evening, as I was walking up that beautiful hill that leads from Putney to Wimbledon, I heard a piano being played in the street in quite a charming way. On investigation, I found a party of young men and women seated in a van, in which was also a piano. This was being played by one of the men. I saw that the men and women wore crêpe masks and cloaks. The pianist played with much power and excellent technique German's dances from " Nell Gwynne."

This finished, one of the women stood up and sang Tosti's "A Night in June." Her voice was so sweet, and the rendering of the song so excellent, that I was delighted. Here, in the street, was beautiful music, sympathetically and artistically performed by people who were nothing more than buskers. What could it mean?

The party consisted of three women and three men. They all sang and played. Then one of the party clambered down from the van in which they were seated, and commenced to beg from the large crowd they had gathered round them.

The money simply poured into the bag. Almost every person in the crowd gave something. I even noticed that

servants brought money from the large houses, in front of which the performance had taken place.

This set me thinking. If good music is so much appreciated, why is there not more of it in the London streets? Why is itinerant music so neglected? Now and then one hears a good voice or a fair performer on some instrument in the street, but, alas! they are chiefly of the unfortunate Rains type.

I pictured a party such as this of masked buskers, periodically visiting and singing in some of our dismal slums. I truly believe that it would have a wonderful influence on the lives of even the terribly degraded inhabitants of those places.

Deep down in the hearts of even the vilest is some broken thought of good, which might be waked by the song that would reach the heart. That the poorer classes of our rich city have a love, an uneducated love perhaps, but an existing one, for pure melody and tender song, is apparent to everyone who knows them intimately

Let a vulgar music-hall song contain but one line of brotherly feeling, one touch of the "fellow-feeling that makes us wondrous kind," and the song will be a popular one; and even if, as is, alas! so often the case, a pretty melody is wedded to the most inane words, yet for its melody alone the song will be sung from end to end of the town.

I soon tired of my busking expedition, however, and hungered for a chance of getting right down among the poorest poor. Mr. C. suggested that we would be likely to gain some unique knowledge by becoming "organ-grinders." The idea pleased me vastly. I begged him to set about starting me in the profession.

Till I visited Italy, and learned the conditions under which the people labour there, I could not understand why any

person gifted with intellect, could voluntarily leave a country of warmth and sunshine, to push a barrowful of indifferent music, called a piano-organ, through the mud and fog of a London street. The matter is no more a mystery to me, now that I know something of the lives of the Italian poor in their own land, as compared with the lives of the Southerners of Saffron Hill.

Right opposite Leather Lane, across the Clerkenwell Road, is Eyre Street Hill, the London home of the Italians. This hill leads down to a number of irregular streets. Groups of Italian women sit at the doors looking picturesque in print bodices and gay-coloured skirts, and the usual gaudy kerchief thrown over the head and tied with careless grace in front. There is an air of Southern repose and lazy indifference about the place.

Lounging against the walls are numbers of dark, swarthy men, wearing ear-rings and slouch hats. Parties of dark-eyed children tumble on the pavement or play in the road. One of their games consists in gambling for walnuts. Here and there stand those gaudy-coloured barrows from which is vended that luxury of the children of the slums, "hokey-pokey," or street ice-cream; "Italiano Ice Creamo," made in "Italy-in-London," is not by any means desirable.

From a dark cellar an unarmed bandit emerges, engaged to-day, however, in the pursuit of piano-organ playing. A more peaceable, though nevertheless a cruel method of mulcting the personal property of his victims, than when on his sunny mountains he ear-lopped for ransom.

This man, being a friend of Mr. C.'s, kindly took us in hand and made Saffron Hill familiar to us. Here are situated the principal premises of the manufacturers and owners of the piano-organs that are played in London. From here may be hired organs by the day, week, or month. To this place



Mr. C. and I made our way, conducted by our friend. He introduced us to the warehouse-master, who was also of Italy ; and after some haggling as to price and the deposit we had to leave as guarantee for the safe return of the organ, we started out on an expedition, the object of which was to find by personal experience how much or how little can be gained in a day by this means. Poor Mr. C. pulled the organ up the hill into the Clerkenwell Road, then stopped breathless. One thing he had discovered already, and that is that organ-pulling is not easy work. After tramping and playing in almost every class of street from Clerkenwell to Chelsea, from 9 a.m. to 8.30 p.m., with only two hours for rest, our earnings amounted to four shillings and fivepence, not a lucrative day's work, one must admit, for two people, with the hire of the organ to be paid for out of the takings.

I never see Italian women pulling these heavy barrows but my heart goes out to them. They have to work so hard for such small returns. I must admit I have a very kindly feeling for these children of the sunny South, whose advent with their organ is so eagerly welcomed by the poor children of many a dismal court and alley. They bring a little music and pleasure into the lives of many who, but for these organs, would never hear a happy sound. The working folk, too, appreciate the music of the street-organs. During our peregrinations, Mr. C. and I stopped outside a large factory, as the girls were coming out at the dinner-hour. We struck up a lively tune, and immediately about twenty of these rather limp-looking girls "set to" and began dancing with much spirit and real enjoyment. It was a delicious relief to them to fling themselves about to the lilt of merry tunes after hours of toiling in a close factory. For the gladness these organs bring to the little slum children and the poor, we must be tolerant of them and their owners.



A hideous evil, however, that exists not only in London but in many of the large cities in Britain, is the Italian padrone, who brings over numbers of little boys, and keeps them in a state of slavery—treating them like animals, and sending them out into the streets with concertinas and monkeys, to beg. One awful case of slavery of this kind came under my own knowledge, and through friends, I was able to rescue three unfortunate children who were the slaves of a great brute of a "padrone."

This man kept the boys in a cellar. They had no beds, but slept on a heap of rags cuddled up with the monkeys to keep themselves and the poor beasties warm. If they returned home with less than a shilling each night, the padrone beat them cruelly, and they got no food at all. There is not a single word that can be said in defence of a practice that places helpless children in the hands of men such as these. Indeed, that such slavery should be countenanced by English law and the British people is shameful. It is a common story enough to find these tiny child-slaves working their little lives away to keep a hulking brute of a master who owns them, body and soul.

During my sojourn with the poor and outcast at different times I came upon many such horrors, which, if our politicians really cared for the welfare of the people at home, could not exist.

## CHAPTER III

### UP AND DOWN THE SOCIAL LADDER—FROM A SOCIETY “CRUSH” TO THE “SPIKE”—THE PRICE OF A SOUL

IT is an ungracious task to accept people's hospitality and make unkind criticisms on the manner of the entertainment. It must be understood, therefore, that in no case where I give an account of society functions, are those functions places where I myself have partaken of hospitality as a private friend. If I have gone to these places it has been either professionally to recite, or else I have been included as a guest because of belonging to some Club or Society which was being entertained. In the East it is considered the very depth of infamy to eat a man's salt and betray him. In the West it is constantly done. A thousand times I have met both men and women who, after they have been graciously entertained and kindly treated, abuse their hosts and hostesses, and pour contempt on the hospitality that has been extended to them. Indeed, this passion for abusing society has proved a gold mine to several writers who would otherwise have remained unknown to fame, but for the fact that every season they appear in print with a volume of vituperation against “Society.”

A most amusing article, written by a Labour member in the House of Commons, appeared some weeks ago in a weekly journal. The good, innocent man seemed to think that all the immorality and heartlessness of the world was concentrated in the *decolletée* bosoms of the ladies promenading on the

Terrace. He speaks of the insolence of beautiful dress, and goes on to say: "Does a woman know how insolent a gleaming white shoulder" (one shoulder, mind you, not both) "may appear to a man dressed in tweed? Does she realise the peculiar effect of the demi-diaphanous drapery in which she clothes, or half-clothes herself?" The *frou-frou* of the silken petticoat made what he considered a "peculiar sound." He goes on to say: "A few evenings ago I saw one woman sauntering along the Terrace who seemed the very incarnation of the spirit of society. Her corsage glittered with ostentatious wealth. Diamonds were in her hair and pendent from her ears. The high, jewelled comb she wore would have paid a skilled workman's wages for the last twelve months.

"This woman, wearing a V-shaped corsage cut from her shapely shoulders down almost to her waist, walked the Terrace without a hint of shame. That men should see her naked flesh gave her no qualm. Her poorer sisters over the river in the slums of Lambeth and the Lower Marsh would have hastily drawn a shawl over their shoulders, were they never so shapely and good to look upon. But this insolent beauty walked without a blush, chattering to her black-coated companion, and ever and again staring at some 'queer' creature lately elected to the privileges of Parliament.

"It's a strange world, and there's no stranger place in it than St. Stephen's. Because it has amused me to study these birds of passage, flaunting their borrowed plumage on the Terrace, I have not forgotten the comely daughters of my own race, the splendid women whose looks would put to shame these artificial beauties. In the ranks of labour you will find less display of shoulders and bosoms, unless, I grant you, in the exercise of those maternal functions which the rich, I am told, have long ago delegated to artificial substitutes."

Now I have made holiday with 'Arry and 'Arriet at 'Appy 'Ampstead. They changed hats and coats. They pushed and slapped each other with a charming familiarity, and on occasion, punched each other's heads. Also, I have lived with the charming sisters of Lambeth and the Lower Marsh, whom this gentleman seems to regard as models of virtue. Unfortunately, however, facts do not corroborate this gentleman's fanciful statements. If the women of Lambeth do not wear low-necked dresses and jewels, they often go about in a petticoat and filthy blouse because they have pawned their skirts. They are often drunk and foul-mouthed. They neglect their homes, and gossip in the streets and drink in the public-houses. There is as much immorality, as much greed, dishonesty, and vice among the poor as there is among the rich ; indeed, how should it be otherwise? Consider their surroundings. Stumbling up a pair of back stairs to a little room I once took in one of the slums at Lambeth, I almost fell over a tiny child of three, who was picking holes in the plaster of the walls. The place was broken down and dilapidated, unfit for the housing of animals, but here several scores of miserable human creatures herded in indecency and immorality. The little child looked up, and in a lisping baby voice said :

"Dod blast yer!" The only use that he knew of the Almighty Name was to blaspheme with it.

The spirit of extravagance and carelessness which is so much discussed in the daily press and contemporary novels is not by any means confined to one class. I have lived with coster women whose earnings were from £1 to 30s. a week, and have found them buying tins of salmon and potted meats, and various other preserved delicacies, rather than take the trouble to cook a wholesome meal of fresh food. It is indeed this passion of laziness, which is characteristic of





A BANQUET AT THE HYDE PARK HOTEL.  
(Night-life in London has many aspects.)





HOMELESS MEN BREAKING THEIR FAST AT 5 A.M. IN A CHURCH ARMY SHELTER.

the times, that is responsible for half the crime in our daily history.

On one occasion I had an engagement through an agent to recite at a society function in Piccadilly. The hostess, on this occasion, was a rich woman, who was bartering her health and comfort and much of her money to get into what she fondly hoped was "Society." She had invited that night some two thousand people, not more than a hundred of whom she knew personally. These people were invited through various clubs and society leaders who were paid for collecting a horde of guests. The lady had provided for their entertainment a concert and dramatic recitals, contributed to by some of the most eminent artistes of the day. The agent who engaged me told me that she had placed £1,000 in his hands to have a distinguished programme.

On that autumn evening I arrived at the house, or rather my cab stood in the street for an hour before it could draw up at the door to deposit me, and here I was bundled into a struggling mass of humanity which was fighting, pushing, and kicking its way upstairs. A kindly butler caught my eye, and I said to him :

"I shall really have to get upstairs somehow."

He shrugged his shoulders. "It will be a matter of time, miss," he said. However, I managed to get near enough to him and slipped five shillings into his hand.

"Get me up somehow," I said.

He took me round to some back passage, and I got to the top by way of the servants' staircase. We walked through a long corridor, and passed through several side-doors, and presently I found myself behind a huge curtain which shut off the drawing-room. I did not see my hostess till one o'clock that night, when she thanked me for my part in the programme, and begged me to go down and have some

supper. A gentleman I knew kindly undertook to pilot me through the awful crowd which had fought its way through the beautiful rooms. In the great dining-hall, adorned with armour and hunting trophies of dead-and-gone heroes who had not the remotest connection with the owners of the house, the crowd pushed and struggled for the dainty food provided. It was as though a horde of famine-stricken creatures had been let loose at a feast. When the food was consumed, the crowd fought its way again to the drawing-room, where the famous singers and musicians were performing. They did their duty, and each in turn discoursed sweet music to the extent for which they were paid. The crowd surged towards them in a fruitless effort to see and hear. The buzz of talk never ceased. The distinguished artistes, mostly foreigners, with legitimate claims to fame, departed, to sneer at the fools who paid them fabulous fees without even caring to hear their music. The unfortunate host stood against the wall of each room successively, with a hopeless, bored expression on his face. Once in a while he saw a familiar figure and spoke to the owner, but the greetings were few and brief, I wondered what manner of people these were who bartered their comfort and dignity for the sake of advertisement. I saw several well-known journalists in the crowd. Each one who spoke to me remarked on the discomfort and struggle there had been to force an entry into the house. I looked forward with extreme interest to the notices of this entertainment in the press. One weekly journal gave a long account of the affair, saying: "Mrs. So-and-So has really grasped the whole art of entertainment; her supper was *recherché*, the flowers were costly and beautiful, the wines beyond reproach, and to crown all, being of an artistic temperament herself, she had gathered into her beautiful salon some of the stars of the musical and

dramatic profession. Everyone was charmed with the hostess's gracious entertainment." I suppose Mrs. So-and-So must have felt her couple of thousand pounds were well invested; but I thought of the entertainment with mixed feelings when, a few nights later, I found myself on the wet steps of the Embankment in company with a wretched creature who, for ten shillings a week, could have been made happy and comfortable for the remainder of her poor old life.

I stumbled over the miserable bundle of rags somewhere on the steps by Westminster Bridge.

"What is the matter?" I said.

"I'm knocked, that's wot's the matter; ill, 'ungry, and knocked." The words came in despairing groans.

The poor old woman was indeed a woeful spectacle, huddled up on the slimy stones, as she turned her poor, sorrow-lined face to mine. The light of the flickering gas-lamp overhead revealed the fact that she was very feeble and very old. The few thin, straggling locks of hair escaping from the rain-soaked bonnet were white. She was wet and cold, and shiveringly drew her ragged shawl more tightly round her weary old body.

"Why are you sitting here? Have you no friends, no home?" I asked.

"'Ome! I ain't got no 'ome," she said.

"Then why do you not go into the workhouse?" I questioned.

"I'm afraid I'll 'ave to. I've kep' out as long as I can," she groaned; "but, my Gawd, I'll 'ave to."

There was no mistaking the evident horror this miserable, almost dying old woman had for the workhouse.

It surprised me. "Why?" I asked myself. "Surely no place nor condition this side of the grave could be worse than she now finds herself in?"



Ratepayers, Boards of Guardians, and the Local Government Board provide and organise homes and refuges for helpless and poverty-stricken creatures, such as the poor woman who lay moaning and shivering here at my feet, yet she, like many others of her class, dreaded to accept this charity.

This was not the first time I had observed a terror of entering the workhouse exhibited by a starving and destitute person.

"Can there be a reason for this dread of 'the big 'ouse,'" I thought, "or is it mere prejudice only?"

Standing on those draughty, rain-washed steps, I determined to probe this question to the root, and find out by personal experience the conditions prevailing in some, at least, of these refuges provided for the homeless and forlorn.

Stooping down I asked the poor old creature to let me assist her up the steps, and invited her to come with me to a coffee-stall which I knew always stood at this time in the morning opposite Somerset House.

I had scarcely raised the tottering woman from the stones when I heard the measured tramp of feet descending the steps, and a moment later, the light from a policeman's lamp was turned upon my companion and myself.

"Now then, my gals, up and out of this. Look slippy, the Sergeant will be round in a minute," the constable said, in a manner that I thought not unkindly.

"This poor woman is ill, Officer," I said.

"Why don't she go into the 'orspital or the hinfirmary, then?" and stooping down, he took her arm and said: "Wot's up, mother?"

"Ill, sir, and broke," she said.

"You looks it," he muttered.

"Will you help me to get her up to the top of the steps?"



I said. "If you can do this, I will give her a cup of hot coffee."

"All right, miss—come along, old lady," he said good-naturedly, and helped by his strong arm we soon had the suffering creature into the roadway.

"Go and 'ave a cup of coffee with this girl, mother, and take my advice, go into the workhouse as soon as you can get in this morning."

This was his parting advice as he disappeared down the steps on his way to the Embankment.

At the coffee-stall I procured for her hot coffee, bread and butter, and an egg, which she devoured like a famished animal. After her meal she felt better, then I began to question her with reference to her hatred of the workhouse.

"My dear," she said, "the 'spike' is worse than the prison."

"What do you mean by the 'spike'?" I asked.

"Why; the casual ward," she said, surprised at my question.

"Surely it is better to be there than out all night in such weather as this. Why do you fear it so much?" I asked.

"Oh, I don't know that it ain't; but I hate it, they bully you so. It's just awful."

"Well, I intend going in myself to-day," I said.

"You!" she cried.

"Yes," I replied. "Why not?"

"But you've got some money," she said, "and if you go in with any money on yer they can lock you up."

"I haven't much money," I said, "not more than we must spend on a good breakfast. After that you and I will go straight to the nearest casual ward and ask them to take us in."

"All right, me dear, so we will. I can't do another night on the stones, it will kill me; but we mustn't go to the nearest

place," she said. "I was there a couple of weeks ago, and if they caught me there again in less than a month, they'd put me in a cell, give me oakum to pick, and keep me in for five nights."

"Are you not allowed to go into a casual ward more than once in a month?" I asked, astonished at this information.

"That's all—that is, in London casual wards. And you are supposed to go fourteen miles before you go into another spike," she continued.

"Do you mean to say that a weak old woman like you is obliged to walk that distance between casual ward and casual ward?"

"Yes, my gal, or if you don't you're a-breakin' the lor; so what we'll do," she continued, "we'll go across the water to the L—— spike, then we'll tell them that we've come from 'Arrow, and that we're a-goin' to Croydon, then we'll be all right."

To this ingenious proposition I agreed.

"We shall 'ave to sit about in the park for an hour or two," she said, "'cause we can't get in afore one o'clock."

So we went and sat on a bench in one of the parks. At twelve o'clock we started off to the dreaded "spike." We arrived at our destination just before one o'clock. When we reached this place there were ten other poorly-clad women standing in a row in front of the red brick building, which I guessed was to be our place of refuge from the street. We silently joined the ragged file, and soon after a neighbouring clock struck one. Almost on the stroke of the hour, a young man, clad in a neat uniform, came from a building on the opposite side of the street, and crossing over to where we stood, he unlocked an iron gate which shut off a covered courtyard from the street.

"Look alive!" he said, in a surly manner, and the women

filed past him into the yard. When we had all entered, he relocked the gate and went back to his office.

One by one the women sat down on the cold paving-stones with their backs to the wall:

"Sit down, my dear," said my old companion; "it's as cheap as standin'."

"But shall we have to wait long?" I asked.

"Till four o'clock," was the dreary response.

"Won't they give us anything to do, or let us into shelter until then?" I asked.

"No. At four o'clock they admits us; till then we waits 'ere."

This was a fact. For three hours fourteen starving, shivering women, one with a young baby, had to crouch on the stones in a draughty yard, with not even a seat provided. There we waited, a pitiful company, exposed to the curious view of every passer-by. The iron gate which shut us off from the public thoroughfare was no screen to hide our misery from the curious, contemptuous, or indifferent passers-by.

The lagging minutes dragged on till it was four o'clock, and the young man in uniform again appeared. He marshalled us into an office.

Seated at a desk was another male official, in front of him a large book, and at his side a young, strong-looking woman, wearing a uniform something like that worn by a hospital nurse. As each woman passed in front of the desk, a number of questions were asked: "Name?" "Occupation?" "Age?" "Where born?" "Where from?" "Where to?" Each question, swiftly and abruptly flung at the woman before the desk, was answered with more or less truth by each applicant.

The answers were entered in the book, often without even a look at the speaker.

After my replies had been entered, I was told by the

young woman to pass on into a long, bare room. This room was also unprovided with seats, and in there the "casuals" had to stand until all had been questioned in the office. By this time it was nearly five o'clock. We were at last all gathered in the room; then the young woman official entered, and ordered us to pass her one by one to be searched. She did not touch me, but asked me what I had in my pocket. I said truthfully: "Nothing." She then bade me pass through into another room.

In this room was a sort of window, with a sliding panel, similar to a window at a railway ticket-office. Through this was passed out to each of us a tin mug and a piece of bread. The mug was filled with a thick, white mixture, which I learned to know as "skilly"—a sort of coarse, half-liquid oatmeal porridge, without seasoning. On the edge of the window was a wooden salt-cellar. I was told we could help ourselves to salt, and we all did so to mitigate the horrid taste of the gluey stuff in the mugs. In the room were two long, bare tables, and on either side of them were placed rough benches without backs. Here, at last, we were able to sit down. By this time I was genuinely hungry, and tried to eat the bread and porridge, but found it difficult. The bread I ate; but not then, or ever, could I manage to swallow the skilly. Why this mess is given, I cannot understand. Why not a good basin of cocoa or even tea? It would hardly cost more, and would certainly be more humane. But the only food I had in this place, or in any casual ward I entered, was the same as this meal, excepting that at dinner a piece of cheese was given with the bread.

When we had finished our meal, the young woman who had asked us to give up to her our belongings came into the room and ordered us to the bath-room. Following her up some stone stairs, I found myself in a long, narrow room,



in which were four earthenware baths. In this bath-room was a woman attendant, wearing a workhouse uniform. Four casuals at a time entered the bath-room; they undressed and fastened their clothes into a bundle. This done, they were told to put them on a form on one side of the room; then the baths were filled with hot water by the attendant. The place was scrupulously clean, but the same bath was used for three paupers. Fortunately, I got a clean bath. My "sisters in misfortune" were extremely averse to taking the baths at all, and on my remarking to one of the women that it would make her more comfortable, I was astonished to see a sneer cross her face and to hear her remark:

"Baths! I'm sick of baths; wherever yer go, yer gits baths. Sickenin' I call 'em."

This, I am afraid, is quite a real grievance to the lowest and more degraded casuals. In some places, unfortunately, such cleanliness does not prevail in the casual ward baths, as I discovered later.

After the bath, each woman was given a night-dress. It was clean, and did not appear to have been worn since it had been laundried.

Attired in this, I was sent across a stone passage into a long dormitory. Ranged on either side of this room were ten beds. Though not soft, they were clean. Sheets, blankets, and good pillows were provided. I think that the beds were equal to those one would find in dormitories of orphanages or convent schools both here and abroad. I have visited many such and found similar cots. I went to bed, and after listening to the grumbling remarks of the old women on either side of me for some time, went to sleep. The hospitality, though cold and heartless, was infinitely preferable to the exposure of the cruel streets, but



afterwards, during other visits of investigation, I encountered such brutality in these places that I sympathised with the wretched outcasts who shrank from entering them.

At six o'clock next morning, I was wakened by the young woman who had ordered us to our supper and bath shaking me. I had to cross to the bath-room, get my clothes, and dress.

When I had dressed, I was told to go to the dining-room. I did so, and found on the table several tin mugs of skilly and several pieces of bread. This was breakfast.

A short grace was said and we commenced to eat. Breakfast finished, we were detailed to different duties. I was sent into the laundry. This was a large, well-appointed place, fitted with machinery. The laundry was under the supervision of a healthy, pleasant-looking woman, who seemed to know by name several of the women who had been sent with me to work under her.

"Can you iron?" she asked me.

"I can try," I answered.

"Very well, then; go over to that ironing-table and iron those night-shirts," she said, not ungraciously, having marked my willingness to work.

I did the best I could. I noticed that several of the women appeared to be quite expert laundresses.

I worked on until noon. There seemed to be no restriction as to talking, and we were all talking when the matron and the dreaded "inspector" entered. This man looked at every "casual" closely, then passed out of the place without saying a word. Soon after he had left the room, however, an official entered, and ordered an old woman who was ironing on the same table as myself to come to the matron's office. One of the other women told me that the inspector had "spotted" her as a woman who had infringed the rules by being in

another metropolitan casual ward within the prohibited time. "She'll get 'cells' and 'oakum,'" she informed me. I suppose this happened, because the old woman did not return.

At noon we were told to leave off work and go to dinner.

This meal was also served in the room in which we had breakfast, and consisted of bread and cheese. After a rest of an hour, we returned to our duties, and worked on until five o'clock. At that hour was finished our work for the day. "Tea" was given to us, or rather skilly and bread. How I longed for a cup of tea! After this meal we were sent to bed.

The night passed in the same manner as the previous one. At six o'clock next morning, I was awakened in the same way as the morning before, but my clothes were now by my bedside. I dressed, and was told to do some cleaning and dusting. After I had done this, I was given my breakfast—more skilly and dry bread. At eight o'clock I was allowed to leave the establishment.

I inquired for my companion, and was told that she had been admitted to the infirmary.

We do not wish to encourage pauperism, and certainly the casual wards cannot be accused of over-tenderness to the poor. There is no sympathy, no touch of humanity—all is coldly and severely ordained. The outcasts come and go, "nobody's people." Later, I tasted the bitterness of the cup of charity provided in others of these wards—brutality and insult being the portion of the applicants for refuge. But here it was not cruel. It deprives one of liberty for nearly forty-eight hours and sometimes longer. The food is not palatable, and the work demanded is quite out of proportion to the value given by way of food and shelter.

The keynote of the establishment in which I sojourned was

exemplary cleanliness. The tone adopted by the officials was a horrid surliness, and I was glad I was not an "habitual."

Many a time and often has it been my experience to go from some fashionable assembly into the haunts of misery, and sometimes an awful fear took hold of me. Some day there must be a terrible reckoning. The mad race for wealth—the passion for idleness and pleasure will have some grim result.

I was present at a great gathering one winter evening in a splendid house. It was a Saturday night; till three o'clock on the Lord's Day crowds of guests filled the rooms. A large apartment was arranged with card-tables, where men and women lost and won large sums of money. One room was devoted to music; in another, theatrical performances were being given. Refreshments were provided, which consisted of the choicest and costliest wines and meats and fruits. There were great silver dishes of peaches that cost not less than two and sixpence each—strawberries at the same price. These things were grabbed for, and fought for by the well-dressed guests who had all previously dined, I suppose. I have heard jokes made about the quantities of food demolished by factory girls and coster lads at feasts provided for them, but these people often have had no other food that day. At a society party, however, there is no such excuse: the food is not needed for sustaining the body.

As I was leaving this particular party in a hansom cab, a smartly-dressed girl came out. It was raining, and there seemed no other cabs in view. She asked me if I could drop her on my way home, and this I consented to do. She got into the cab. She was a pretty girl, and I had watched her for a few minutes playing in the Bridge-room. Suddenly she turned to me and abruptly said:

"Do you believe there is a God?"

"Of course I do," I said.

"Well, I don't," she answered; "or if there is a God, He doesn't seem to care much about women."

"Why do you say that?" I asked.

"Because I have lost £100 at Bridge to-night and haven't a cent to pay it with."

"Why blame God for such folly?" I said.

"Well, I often have luck. I owe a beast of a man a lot of money, and I hoped to win enough to pay him. I prayed that I might be lucky. I kept my 'lucky pig' in my pocket all the time too, and I wore this amber cross and prayed on it. Anyway, I've lost £100, and there'll be the devil to pay."

"You prayed to God through an amber cross and a 'lucky pig,'" I gasped. "Is that the way your mother taught you?"

"Oh, the mater's not a bad sort," the girl said. "She takes choral and drinks eau de Cologne since the pater warned the tradespeople not to serve her with brandy. I get it for the poor old lady sometimes, she becomes such a wreck without something."

"Shall you tell your father about losing this money?" I asked.

She laughed.

"You wouldn't ask such a ninny sort of question if you knew the pater. He makes hell for everyone when he has to shell out money. The mater always runs bills, and about once a year there is a fearful rumpus, and pater pays what he's forced to."

"Is he very badly off?" I inquired.

"Oh, we're as poor as paupers. Pater has four thousand a year, the mater has three hundred; I have what I make at Bridge, or off presents I get."

"How can you make money 'off' presents?"

"Oh, sell them or pawn them. I generally 'pop' them, as



one can get them out for a night if necessary, by paying a deposit, and it saves one looking stony-broke when one goes out."

The girl spoke in the calmest way of these dreadful things, and I felt an intense pity for her. I asked her what she would do about getting the money.

"Oh, God knows!" she said. "I suppose I shall have to take it from that beast."

"Does that mean you must sell your soul for £100?" I asked, horrified.

"I suppose so, unless something turns up. Do you suppose if I prayed again in some other way, God would hear? Are you a religious sort?" she said.

"I don't know what a 'religious sort' is," I replied; "but I believe in God. He has helped me many times when I have been in great trouble."

Instantly the girl turned to me.

"Do you play, then; or was it because of some man?"

"Neither," I said.

The cab drew up at her door.

"Come in for a little while," she begged; "the mater's sure to be in bed, and I left the pater with Mrs. —, he won't be home yet."

"In that case," I said, "will you come on to my rooms? It is nearly morning, so you better bring a long coat to wrap up in."

She went upstairs and brought down a dark garment, and we went on to my lodgings. I lit the gas fire and heated some cocoa. My landlady always left some simple refreshment for me when I was out late. A more sorrowful tale of wasted lives than that miserable girl told me, I have never heard. Had she been a working girl, it would have been easier to help her, but she was a lady, of good family, who



despised all honest work, and there was something awful in her idea of God—an erratic Being who played with souls as she played with the cards.

“I suppose,” I said, “that you must pay this card-debt?”

“Of course,” she answered, “it is a debt of honour.”

Ah me! to think that women had come to accept a man’s code in the matter of “honour.”

“What would happen if you did not pay?” I asked.

“Some sweep would sneak to the pater, and anyway, I’d be cut, and never allowed to play again.”

“Would that be such a loss?”

“Wouldn’t you think it a loss never to have any money? To be in debt to the butler, and have your maid impertinent because you couldn’t tip her?”

“Well,” I said, “I have neither butler nor maid.”

“Goodness!” she said “How do you dress and do your hair?”

I laughed. In the face of the tragedy before us, it seemed odd that doing without a maid should seem a calamity to my companion.

“Couldn’t your mother help you?” I asked.

“Poor old mater, she hasn’t a cent. She’s always hard up herself.”

“Look here!” I said desperately. “Couldn’t you just drop everything, and begin life somewhere else decently? You could get a post of some sort perhaps, or you might go to some Sisterhood for a while; I know you could get a home and refuge.”

The girl laughed bitterly.

“How delightful!” she said. “Fancy drudging away in dowdy clothes with some awful old dowds. No dances, no cards, no pretty clothes, no anything.”

I was dumb.

"Can't you lend me the money?" she said at last.

"You see," I explained, "I have to work for the money I make, and I haven't got that sum to lend you."

"Oh, well, it doesn't matter. It will be all the same a hundred years hence. I'll get the money from that toad."

I knew instinctively the price she would be forced to pay for the loan. She was going to the market where souls are sold to the highest bidder. It seemed a fearful price to pay for fine clothes and pleasure. However, the girl did not get the money from the "toad."

Three years after, I met her by accident in an hotel in Paris. She was beautifully dressed. Her hair was arranged in the latest fashion. She wore costly jewels. Her face was painted. She was alone. I forgave her for forgetting a debt that was not a "debt of honour."

## CHAPTER IV

### FANCIES AND FACTS—FACTORY LIFE—MAKERS OF MILLIONS

BEFORE I came to England I had, through such mediums as story books, lantern lectures, circulars from institutions, such as Dr. Müller's Orphanages, Dr. Barnardo's Homes, and other places of that ilk, obtained what I thought rather a comprehensive knowledge of the poorer side of life in Great Britain. Two books which were sources of constant delight to me when I was a tiny child, were a story called "Froggy's Little Brother," and another called "The Match-Girl." The first was a charming tale of two little crossing-sweepers, who lived in an attic in Shoreditch, and "The Match-Girl" was the story of a little child obliged to stand in the streets of London (I think in the book the snow was always on the ground) selling matches for the support of a family—I forget just now whether the "family" were supposed to do anything for their own support or not. The books were profusely illustrated, and the stories of these children were made very real to me. I also had a lovely story about "Flower Girls," and my disappointment on finding that the flower-girls of fiction had absolutely no connection with the flower-girls of the London streets was most keen. I expected to find flaxen-haired, blue-eyed, innocent-looking children pleading with the passers-by in an irresistible manner, instead of which I found wet, draggled flowers thrust under my nose in crowded thoroughfares, by

dirty and untidy women ; most of them were ugly, and some of them were fat and old. ] Indeed, the romance of London life soon faded away, and I was brought into actual contact with things as they are, in place of things as they are written about. My desire to render service to the needy, to the working girls and women in this country, was not because of romance or sentiment, but because of the knowledge that unless those who are able will fight the battle for those who are disabled, there can be no hope of eventual reforms in the social system. Not that any single person can do much, but our concern is not with what individuals may accomplish. We have merely to decide, and do what we each consider duty demands of us personally, leaving the issue with God.

#### THE MAKERS OF MILLIONS

To the average person there is something fascinating about the title "Millionaire." Indeed, there lies in it so much virtue that one having a right to use it finds the world a pleasant place, go where he will. There is a certain glamour about immense wealth that the whole world acknowledges, yet not many people concern themselves with the methods employed in the production of that wealth, or with the business practices of the Makers of the Millions they either envy or admire. Lately a cynic wrote in an English newspaper, that it is not necessary to build more churches, since those already in existence often lie coldly empty ; but he suggested instead, that the Bank of England be persuaded to open its doors on Sundays, and some financier like Pierpont Morgan be engaged to hold services there. "The overwhelming crowds of worshippers of the Almighty Dollar," he said, "would leave no doubt as to the true trend of religion in the present day."

Fortunately, we are not all cynics ; but because it is true that possessors of wealth are looked upon with as much interest in England as elsewhere, I venture to tell a few stories of the means utilised to gain money by some of the wealth-makers as I knew them.

It may be, that when one has been hungry and cold during many hours of hard toil, and found that, after all, the labour of one's hands could scarcely wring a bare living from these narrow times, that one is led to question the justice of the fate that has made the labourer so ill-considered an item in the economy of life, while those gathering the fruits of his labour are held in such esteem.

There is no knowledge so convincing as knowledge won by personal experience ; and now that I know the lives of the majority of the toilers in our great cities, having been with them, and one of them, I feel a very kindly sympathy for all those who earn their bread with the work of their hands.

The story of my life among the factory girls would be incomplete without a little account of the first real insight I got into the lives of this class of workers. At first my interest, like that of most other casual visitors, was simply of an outsider for people one pities and usually misunderstands. But when I was happy enough to win the friendship of Mrs. Sara Rae, who has given her life to the service of the factory and coster girls of Hoxton, I began my first real and intimate acquaintance with these people. True, I had visited clubs and guilds for girls of the working classes in many parts of London and other cities where I travelled. In them I saw many excellent women of all conditions and ages doing useful work according to their lights. They were either "doing them good," with a very conscious air, or "educating" them, or giving them "culture"; but even to



my limited experience there seemed something a little artificial about these efforts; and it was only after I had met Mrs. Rae and been down to Hoxton many times, and realised how wonderfully valuable one absolutely devoted, clever, and liberal woman could be to her country and individuals needing a practical friend, that there grew up in my heart a real love for the girls whom she loved so truly and served to such good purpose—girls whose lives contained but little real beauty, who contrived, nevertheless, to be cheerful and even happy. It was after continued visits to Hoxton and close and intimate friendship with Mrs. Rae that I awoke to the fact that I could never do very much for these people until I had really tasted life with them. I had no desire to win my knowledge of them by twenty years of waiting. My desire was to know them and understand them, and be free to serve them in some way while I was still young, and not obliged to take up “doing good” as a sort of profession when every other interest had failed.

With great circumspection, and as delicately as possible, I hinted to my friend my desire to get work in a factory as an ordinary factory hand. She, however, would not encourage the idea.

“My dear girl,” she said, “you have no conception of the hardship of the life and the dreadful surroundings.”

But I had made up my mind; I went to my old friend, Mr. C., for advice as to how to make a start.

“Shall I try and get you a job at a factory in Hoxton?” he asked.

“Oh, no; I would not dare to go there,” I answered, “the Hoxton people know me too well; try New Cross, or any other locality where there are factories. Get me a fairly easy place for the first, if possible,” I begged.

“Yes,” he retorted, laughing, “that is what the girls always

want, plenty of money, plenty of fun, and not much work."

A few days after, Mr. C. called at my place and informed me that he had secured a lodging for me in the house of an artisan acquaintance of his, whose daughters were working in a factory in South London. These girls had promised to do their best to get me employment in the same factory.

Mr. C., out of his fertile imagination, had given them urgent reasons why I should have work found for me at once—"A poor little furin' sort o' gal, not too smart about London, but 'as a good 'art." I thanked him for this description of me, and packing my box as if I was going to visit friends, I drove away from my place. Arriving at a little room in a quiet street where many of my transformation scenes have been performed, I packed away my decent clothes, left my trunk in my room, carrying out with me only a small basket and a bundle. Mr. C. met me in the street and was quite approving. "You'll do fine," he said.

It was afternoon when we set off to the place he had found for me. We threaded our way through small and unfamiliar streets and approached the house, which was in a narrow street, with the inevitable public-house at one corner and a pawn-shop at the other. In the street were three miserable little shops, fly-blown and untidy, the windows filled with bread, cheap tins of milk and salmon, and such goods. Shops in these neighbourhoods are generally run on a weekly credit system, the customers having a book in which the goods they take away are entered. They settle their accounts on Saturday night. Of course, the person receiving credit has to pay a much higher price for his goods than one who pays cash. Nevertheless, as I found, this system often helps a poor woman to tide over a serious moment and to provide a meal for many a little mouth that would otherwise be empty.

With the exception of an occasional cheap joint or a pound of fourpenny "block ornaments," as the small pieces of meat that butchers cut from the joint are called, many women seldom buy anywhere else than at the general shop.

We arrived at No. 20, the house of our friends, about five o'clock. Mr. C. signalled our advent by a single bang on the knocker of the already open street door.

"One never knocks a double knock," said Mr. C. ; "it would be likely to alarm the inhabitants. Only doctors or officials double knock in this sort of neighbourhood."

"They are at tea," whispered Mr. C., and there came up to us a smell of cooking bloaters.

No notice being taken of our first knock, Mr. C. banged again more loudly than before. This summons brought a small girl to the door. That she had left the tea-table was obvious by the fact that she carried a large slice of bread and butter partly in her hand and partly in her mouth. She greeted us with "Wot yer want?" Before we could answer, a man's rough voice called from the room at the end of the little passage, "Who is it, Ameelia?"

Mr. C. informed Ameelia that it was the new lodger.

"Oh, come this way," said the girl. Then screamed out : "Ere's the noo lodger, father."

We were ushered into a back room about ten feet square, yet in the small space were not less than nine persons, besides Mr. C., Ameelia, and myself.

Mr. C. introduced me to Mr. Cruddock. Mr. Cruddock rose from the table and extended his shirt-sleeved arm towards me so that I might shake his hand.

"Wot'll yer 'ave? A drop of beer or a cup of tea—say the word now? Mother, give the young gal a cheer. Git up, Billy. Go and finish your tea in the yard ; that'll give us some more room."

Billy carried his tea and bread to some unknown region. I found a little corner at the table, then came more introductions. Mrs. Cruddock ; Kate Cruddock, the eldest daughter, a girl who became a great friend of mine ; Jane Cruddock, her sister, a girl of eighteen, always laughing, although not having much in her life to make her laugh ; Jim Cruddock, the eldest son, and two awkward-looking young men who were simply presented as "friends of the gals." These, with two or three children, who were squeezed into small spaces, were introduced to me with waves of the hand and nods.

In the centre of the table was an immense dish containing thick pieces of bread and butter. There was also a huge tin tea-pot, and every one of the party had a cup and saucer.

"Tea or beer? Just mention it," said the hospitable Mr. Cruddock.

Both Mr. C. and I voted for tea. There was a little delay before we were supplied, however, owing to the shortness of cups. In fact, we had to wait until two of the children's were washed up for us.

After tea Mr. C. took his leave, and Kate invited me up to the room I was to share with her. It was small, but neat and clean, and overlooked a number of tiny back-yards decorated with the usual washing which hung out on lines. Kate was a sturdy, red-faced girl, with good eyes and plenty of towsled hair.

"Where are yer goin' ter-night?" she asked.

"I don't know," I answered. "I have not thought of it."

"Well, look here! I'll get rid of my bloke dahnstairs and we'll go to the Wash."

I placed myself in her hands.

Kate went downstairs, and soon after I heard the young man and the other sister leave the house,



Having threepenny worth up in the "gawds," as going to the gallery of one of the cheap music halls is called, is a very favourite form of recreation for a factory girl. "Walking out with her bloke" is another, though milder, excitement.

Kate and I got to this particular music hall, and had to stand outside in a long queue waiting for the doors to open, and here I had an example of the capacity these girls have of taking care of themselves, or, as they call it, "getting their own back." A "gentleman" happened to tread on the toes of a girl standing behind us. He looked a young man of the junior clerk type. She turned quickly on him, and he said :

"I beg your pardon."

"What did you do it for?" she said.

"I beg your pardon," he repeated.

"Beg my pardon," she sneered. "Don't yer beg here, or you'll get locked up." Then to the admiring crowd: "He's got all the world to flop abaht on, yet he wants the little bit I'm standing on for his ugly 'oofs."

"I said I beg your pardon, and no gentleman can't do more. I tell you I did not see you."

"Did not see me," this with a contemptuous jeer. "That's the worst of havin' second-hand eyes."

"Don't be too hard on the gentleman," said another girl, joining the fun. "You wasn't there a minute, was yer, Percy?"

"I beg your—" the youth again began, but was cut short by the irate lady assuming a fighting attitude, and telling the young man "to 'op it afore she set abaht." He discreetly retired to the rear.

The entertainment we witnessed was as curious to me as the introduction had been. We went up into the gallery, paying threepence each for standing-room, amid a crowd of noisy young people, who were either vigorously enthusiastic



or mercilessly critical. I followed with interest each item of the singularly mixed programme.

First of all, there emerged an extremely fat lady, very *décolletée*, with a string of diamonds as large as pigeons' eggs around her throat. Her dress was of white satin, spangled over. She was received with vociferous cheers, and I heard someone ask: "When's the balloon going up?" She sang one of the usual music-hall songs, then proceeded to disrobe herself rapidly, and stood revealed in pink tights, in which she sang "Home, Sweet Home." She might have been a Patti for the appreciation that was shown to her efforts, but I think that it was the song that evoked the applause, for, curious as it may seem, these people who have least cause to love home, having but unlovely places of shelter, are yet faithful to the beautiful sentiment expressed in the old song.

After the performance was over, I went out with Kate, and we joined a party of young people strolling homewards. There were noisy jokes and loud laughter, but no bad language was used, and there was really nothing objectionable in the companionship. It was late when we got to bed, and it seemed to me that we had hardly slept for an hour before there was a loud knocking at the door, and Mr. Cruddock's voice called out: "Look spry, gals, or you'll be late."

We jumped up, and as quickly as possible got ready. Kate and I made our beds and went downstairs, where we had a breakfast of bread and butter and coffee, with a piece of fried bacon. We then made our way to the factory, which was one for the manufacture of aerated waters. Kate was earning at this factory fifteen shillings a week, and was considered a very good hand. She was evidently a favourite also, for she had no hesitation in taking me with her to see the

foreman. After a few questions, he agreed to take me on to begin in the bottle-washing room, at the magnificent salary of three shillings a week, since I was a new hand without experience. We had to be at the factory at eight o'clock every morning, and we left at seven in the evening. One hour we had for dinner in the middle of the day, and half-an-hour for tea.

Kate and Jane behaved nobly by me, and I was comfortable, for they had a respectable home, dressed well, and according to their ideas, lived well ; but many of the other employees were of a much lower class, and their ways were extremely rough.]

I learned here of an evil that threatens the happiness of many of these girls' lives, and that is a passion for gambling that is rampant among a great section of the working girls in London. Almost every factory has its own "starting price book-maker" who is established in the vicinity. I found that on Saturdays many of the girls employed in this particular factory used to gather in groups and discuss the odds and merits of race-horses with as much eagerness as their betting brothers and fathers, and they risked with this man a far larger proportion of their hard-earned shillings than would seem creditable when one realised how small a return their labour brings.

According to Government returns, the Aerated Water Manufactories represent the most dangerous employment for women, and the number of accidents in them is larger in proportion than in other manufactories, except the factories where cotton is prepared: 544 women were injured during the year 1903, and many deaths were caused in this trade. The hurts are principally due to explosions and broken glass, or careless use of machinery. The Government has done much to protect workers in these factories who have but little care for themselves. The first Factory Act was passed



FACTORY, GIRLS WAITING IN THE STREET FOR THE DOORS TO OPEN.  
MISS MALVERY IS LAST IN THE GROUP.





WOMEN AT WORK IN A DATE-PACKING FACTORY IN ARABIA.

in 1802, but since that time numerous Acts have been passed for the protection of the worker. The Factory Acts as they now stand are, as far as they go, sound and good, but, of course, there is still much room for reform. I am bound to say, though, that from my experience in the several factories, that the abuses existing are not the fault of the law. There are excellent women inspectors to safeguard the interest of women and children-workers who have to earn their living in factories and workshops. The Government tries to give the factory girl regular hours, though these are far too long.

I recently visited a model factory in America, the President of which is one of the greatest millionaires and most progressive business men in the States, and he told me that he had found it paid him in dollars and cents to reduce the working hours of his factory hands. He employs 5,000 work-people, and assured me that their efficiency was doubled when they worked without fatigue. If this reform can be carried out successfully in America, surely in England the hours of work could be somewhat lessened without loss of money to the employers. In every factory where I have been, I have worked ten or eleven hours each day, and I maintain that no woman is able to do effectual work for so prolonged a period.

It is forbidden for any woman to clean machinery in motion in a factory, and every factory worker is supposed to have 250 cubic feet of air.

It struck me as an extremely curious example of the strange difficulty there is in protecting half-educated or wholly ignorant persons, when I found that almost all factory girls looked upon the inspectors as personal enemies, exactly in the same way that the poorer people regard the police, who, to us, stand for representatives of protection and safety.



I have found that many breaches of the law are not only condoned but are absolutely concealed by the girls themselves, and the fear of the "sack" will often prevent the exact truth being told as to the amount of overtime worked.

Mr. C. came to see me several times during my life at the Cruddocks', and he supplied me from time to time with small sums of money for the little necessities that arose from day to day; for I found—despite my determination—that it was impossible to live on three shillings a week. I paid for my board alone four shillings, and for sharing the room with Kate two shillings a week. If I had not been able to supplement my scanty earnings, I should have fared badly indeed. It is always the girls who live in homes such as I first shared who are the best off among the factory workers, for they are not expected to contribute their entire earnings to the family, and get many advantages from living in a household which they would not be able to afford were they entirely dependent on providing their own home. The hospitality of these people is marvellous. True, they are not thrifty, and seldom is there anything put by for a rainy day, but what they have they share liberally.

Mr. C. was invited to the house for the next Sunday's dinner, and I had the pleasure of going out with the mother to do her marketing on the Saturday night. The two girls went out with their "blokes."

The Sunday dinner is almost a fetish in the home of the London factory girl.

"Why, it wouldn't be like Sunday if there wasn't no roast and boiled. Ye see it's the only day in the week when we all sits down together, and I likes to make a bit of a fuss like," Mrs. Cruddock said.

Thus the buying and providing the food for Sunday is generally a very important business.

Among the people I lived with then, the shopping was nearly all done between the hours of 6 and 12 p.m. on Saturday evening, but I found that some of the still poorer people did most of their marketing on Sunday morning because many of the goods are sold cheaper at that time.

Mr. Cruddock, who was a great admirer of his wife, told me that the old woman would make a couple of shillings go further than some could a dollar. (It is curious among the poor people of London that they use the word dollar so much.) Good managers some of these women are, and Heaven knows, it requires good management to provide food for ten or twelve mouths during a whole week on twenty or thirty shillings. The best of this class of women will go several miles in order to find the cheapest markets. But as a rule, I found them hopelessly unthrifty, and very ignorant of food-values apart from butcher's meat.

Down I went with Mrs. Cruddock that Saturday night into all the noise and light and good-tempered gaiety of their narrow market street, which was lined on either side with gay coster stalls on which were displayed every variety of goods that might be necessary for a housekeeper. The mere spending of money, be it ever so little, seems to give immense pleasure to the throngs of poor women eager for bargains at these stalls or shops. The very poorest seem to obtain some comfort from the sight of displayed food, and the feeling of warmth; and the crowd passes gaily along, each shopper either buying the cheapest wares or watching the more fortunate ones make their purchases. The air was resonant with hundreds of voices. Costers calling the price of their wares, hawkers yelling for buyers, buskers singing or playing, piano-organs with their crowds of dancing children, noisy showmen pattering at the doors of penny gaffs, shrill cries of little children, all delighted to come a-marketing with mother :

these are the sights and sounds that make up the market of the poor.

By far the noisiest, and as a rule, the most energetic salesmen, in this market at any rate, were the cheap butchers. Crowds of women were standing around every meat shop, which was hung from roof to ground with carcasses and joints of meat. Mrs. Cruddock stopped before one where the man was carrying on a sort of auction.

"'Ere ye 're. 'Ere ye 're. Eightpence, sixpence, fivepence. 'Ere ye 're. Fourpence a pound. Hasn't none of you got no money? 'Ere ye 're—threepence a pound—sold again." And then after a sale was completed he shouted: "Buy, buy, buy." He caught sight of Mrs. Cruddock on the edge of the crowd, and fixing his eye on her, said: "Look! 'ere ye 're. What do for your governor? That's a nice little piece to put the old man in a good humour to-morrow." But Mrs. Cruddock would have none of that, and chose her own joint.

I stood a little while watching the girls come around, and learned a few lessons in domestic economy.

"Here, my dear," called the butcher, "here's a prime little bit of beef; good for roasting, boiling, and eating."

"What! you call it meat?" said one of the girls. "Why, my bloke soles his boots with better stuff than that."

"No, my dear," said the man, "not with better than this. Why, this is a piece of good old English beef."

"I ain't no juggins," said the girl, "I don't want your kag mag. Give us something to eat."

The Sunday dinner was a memorable one for me. It was the last I had in that united household. Twelve of us sat down to a table originally built for four, but everyone seemed to enjoy the dinner, and afterwards we went out for a walk in the Park. The girls danced on the green, or walked with

their arms around each other's waists, and exchanged curious witticisms with the various young men lounging about.

Not for some time did I tell Mr. C. that I had had enough of work in an aerated water factory, and wanted now to enter some factory in another part of the town, where I could live with just one factory girl as her chum.

It happened about this time that I met, one day, two girls who were fighting in a poor district where there were three large factories. These girls had been, I was informed, close chums and had lived together; but one of them had annexed her friend's young man, and this was the cause of furious enmity. A policeman stepped in and parted the girls, and I sat down beside one of them who collapsed in a heap on the pavement. She was much subdued, and in answer to my inquiries told me where she lived. I accompanied her to her home, stayed talking with her until eleven that night, and left, only after promising to come and join her to take the place of her faithless friend. Two days after, with my bundle, not on my shoulder, but under my arm, I made my way out to the suburban district where this girl lived. She had one small room at the top of a block of tenement houses. The room was furnished with a stove, which served the double purpose of cooking and heating, and she had all her possessions almost within hand-reach when she sat in the middle of her small domain. She suggested very kindly that I should share her bed, but I hardly felt equal to this philanthropy, so we went out and purchased a folding-chair, a kind of resting-place, whereon I have spent many nights. The chair cost seven and sixpence. My ulster had to serve as a blanket for the first night, but the next day I bought a shawl and pillow.

Annie was my friend's name, and she worked in a factory a long distance from where she lived. To reach her work she had to make a railway journey, the full fare of which would



have absorbed the greater part of her scanty wages. She therefore took advantage of a workmen's train, the last tickets for which were not sold later than 7 a.m. The particular factory where Annie worked opened at 8.15, so that she had to travel to London and stand about in the streets until the gates of her factory opened. I have seen many times a number of these unfortunate girls huddled together on a wet morning beneath the friendly shelter of an arch or doorway. Anyone arriving at Liverpool Street in the early morning would notice many of these factory girls waiting about in the station until it is time for them to commence work.

Annie took me to her factory, which was one for the manufacture of fancy boxes. I had to answer a number of questions, and then was engaged as a learner. I was sent up to a girl whom I found at work at a bench in a long room crowded with other benches and girls. My task was to work for her at no wages for one month. After this time I was to be put upon piece-work myself. This arrangement meant that I had to give my time to this girl for a month in return for the instruction she could give.

On arriving at her bench I asked her if she was the person to whom I had been sent; she nodded. I gave her my message, and she glanced up at me, giving me a comprehensive and sweeping look.

"You've started late, ain't yer?"

"Yes," I said; "but I hope not too late."

"Well, that depends," she said. "You can't pick up box-making in a minute, gal."

"I will do my best," I said humbly.

"That'll show willing, at any rate," she answered, with a smile.

Then she told me to follow her to the cutting-room. This I



did, and was loaded with pieces of cardboard cut to sizes, and ready to fasten together. Going back to the bench, my instructress began quickly gluing strips of paper with one finger, then transferring the glued strip to the edge of the card with her other fingers, keeping the one wet with glue out of the way. She worked with incredible speed. My first day's work consisted in little more than fetching cardboard from the cutters and stacking boxes that my teacher seemed to produce on her work-bench much in the same manner that a conjuror produces valuable articles out of nothing. Once or twice I essayed the gluing of the boxes, but do what I would, I could not prevent my fingers getting glued together, and had to wash them, which, my companion told me, was waste of time. It seemed to me that I would never be able to accomplish box-making, and from conversation with other girls employed in the factory, I learned that it takes at least one year's training to earn as much as six shillings a week, and expert box-makers require a training of three years. The girl who was teaching me earned fourteen shillings a week, and she was one of the smartest workers in the factory.

About eighty girls and young women were employed in this place. All the young women were under the direct supervision of a foreman who gave out work to the piece-workers and examined it when finished.

From this and other experiences of the same kind, I believe that the practice of putting men in charge of young girls and women is a very unsatisfactory one. It is a practice that should be discouraged as much as possible. How often I have heard the girls bitterly complain of the favouritism and injustice of the men in charge of their work. They rarely complain of their hours or their wages, but they are almost unanimous in complaining of their foremen and overlookers. Of course, on behalf of the foremen it may be said, that if they are not

severe and exacting, this class of girl is apt to get out of hand ; but in my opinion, a very serious responsibility rests upon those factory-owners who employ men overlookers in their women's workshops.

My hours of work in the box factory were from 8.15 until 12, then, after an hour's rest for dinner, work started again, and continued until 6 p.m. In busy times the girls worked on until 8 p.m. As we had to come a long distance to our work, we generally brought our dinner with us. This consisted of slices of bread and butter with a bit of ham or beef between, but some of the girls went out to a coffee-house near by, and others to a little cook-shop, where they got meat and potatoes ready cooked and brought it to the doors of the factory, where they either sat in groups to eat it, or wandered about in the streets until the factory opened again.

Men have forced a better state of things for themselves, thanks to the Trades Unions, factory-owners are obliged to provide suitable eating-rooms for their employees, but for women workers there is rarely any provision made for them to have their meals in comfort. Long hours of standing and ill-chosen and unnutritious food, swallowed in any chance corner, make it impossible for the girls to produce the good work they might, if they worked under better conditions.

At the magnificent factory of the National Cash Register Company in America, where I was a guest for some time, I was shown the girls' dining-room, where the Company provided meals, that anyone might have enjoyed, at a very small cost to the workers, and the Directors assured me that since the establishment of this room, where good food was comfortably served, the girls' capacity for work had been increased at least one-third, so that, as one of them put it, "it paid in

actual cash to look after the workers." The Company also had a splendid cooking school for the girls.

My life with Annie was characteristic of a factory girl's life. We lived together as friends, went to work together, and returned home together. She took me to some of the clubs to which she belonged.

Once I went with her to a "penny 'op." This was a dance given in the back parlour of a small public-house. I was afflicted with a sprained ankle, which is a disease I am very subject to on such embarrassing occasions, so I sat against the wall, and watched some of these young creatures disport themselves. The young men took them out occasionally into the bar and treated them to drinks. We did not get home until twelve o'clock, and I found that these evening expeditions made it very difficult for us to rise in the morning in time for our work.

We had to rise at six o'clock in order to catch our train, and to be sure of getting there in time we employed a "knocker-up"—quite an institution in factory life. He is a man who, for fourpence or sixpence a week, undertakes to call at any hour in the morning persons whose business requires them to be up at hours when more fortunate mortals are fast asleep.

Annie and I took it in turns every morning to get our own breakfasts. We had, as a rule, coffee and bread and butter, and as an occasional treat we would have a slice of bacon or a bloater, but we rarely spent more than twopence on our breakfast. We almost always ran to the railway station, where we had to push our way through a crowd of men to obtain our tickets at the booking-office. It was necessary for us, as we took the workmen's train, to have the exact amount of fare required, as no change was given, and we considered ourselves extremely fortunate if we were able to get a seat to

our destination. Why, I wonder, is it not made a punishable offence for railway companies to crowd their carriages in this shameful way, when omnibus companies are prosecuted for carrying an overplus of passengers? What with the fatigue of the journey, and the waiting out in the streets until the factory gates were opened, I found that Annie and I were tired almost before work begun, and I hunted for some place where we might spend a little time while waiting to commence work.

I found in the neighbourhood of our terminus a church, which the sensible and Christian vicar had caused to be opened in the morning for the use of these very girls, and here I discovered from seven to nine o'clock crowds of young women seated quietly reading or sewing. To Annie and me this place was a God-send. It was close to the factory, and every morning while I worked at this place we found a shelter in this quiet sanctuary. It would be a good and noble use to which many churches in the metropolis might be put, and many a young life, unsheltered and uncared-for, might be saved and protected if such a place of refuge was open and easy of access.

I made friends with several of the girls who worked in this factory, and sometimes we were accompanied home by a little throng, whose conversation was always full of interest to me. I was interested to learn that the reading these girls most favoured was the novels we know as "Penny Shockers." Annie told me that she only liked the ones "wif plenty of luv and blood in them." They delight in the love-affairs and intrigues of earls and duchesses, and revel in the florid descriptions indulged in by the writers of this class of fiction.

One day as I was returning from work with Annie a girl came up and joined us. She began telling Annie of a book she had just been reading.

"Yus," she said; "I read it right through afore I went to



sleep. As I was a-sayin', when the h'earl read this 'ere false letter what this 'ound, Sir Eustice, had sent 'im, he ups and goes down the marble steps, an' out inter the cold night air, and goes strite down the avenoo, and there he comes right atop of this 'ere Sir Eustice, who was a-standin' theer wif Lidy Clarise in 'is arms."

"Gawd!" gasped the listener; "wot 'e do?"

"'E jest folded 'is arms and gazed at 'em cold-like for a minit."

"Yus; an' then?"

"Why, Lidy Clarise, she tears 'erself out of the arms of Sir Eustice, and flings 'erself dahn on the ground at the h'earl's feet."

"Wot 'e do?"

"Why, 'e treated 'er wif scorn and spumery-like."

"Oh, pore gal! Yus?"

"Then 'e goes for the 'ound wif 'is riding-whip. An' the way 'e set abaht 'im was great, strite. Sir Eustice 'owed for mercy."

"Lor! I wouldn't arf like to read it. Bring it ter-morrer, will yer, Lizy?"

"Right oh!"

"Wot d'yer call it?"

"'The Luv wot Kills.'"

I made the experiment of reading to some of these girls Stevenson's "Treasure Island" and a story of Mrs. Hodgson Burnett's, and I found they were much interested. But these books are not to be bought for a penny or twopence, and the factory girl has not surplus cash to stock a library. I went to three Girls' Clubs and took out books in order to see the kind of literature provided for these hungry young minds. In one I had a choice of sickly stories interlined with moral platitudes—in another, some educational books, some not



very good stories, and some books on general subjects not of much interest to the factory girls. In a third I found some well-known and quite excellent books, but nowhere was there a really wise selection. Factory girls have such hard, exacting toil, and as a rule, such a good supply of animal spirits and mental energy, that they must find an outlet for their pent-up feelings. They rush screaming out of their factory often—and will dance with perfect abandon and delight to the strains of a barrel-organ in the dinner-hour, and do all manner of strange things purely from relief at being out in the air.

I used to grow faint very often in the cardboard box factory—the air was bad, the light bad too, and the lack of good food, added to the hardship of the work. No woman earned quite a pound a week in this factory—we had continually to work overtime, and often workers were obliged to go out ill. There was absolutely no thought for the employees—yet in looking over the financial columns of a paper, I saw the year's dividend paid by this very factory—and the profits were most excellent : good commerce is the stay of the nation, but no nation can hold pre-eminence whose workers are underpaid, forced to labour in unwholesome conditions, and unprovided with suitable resting and eating places.

My experience of work in a jam factory was very difficult to endure. I got employment at a large factory of this sort. It would be a great mistake to put all factory workers in the same category. In some classes of trade they are superior girls. In a French polishing factory which I know, the girls have to work hard, and have actual manual labour, but they are better paid than in many factories, and they are intelligent and superior girls. But in the jam factories, tin-box factories, and fur-sewing houses, the workers are often of a very rough class. In these branches of trade many married women work, and the behaviour and language of these women is

generally bad. One reason is, that a man must be low and degraded indeed to allow his wife to work in a factory. The women are therefore of a rough and bad type, and the young girls working with them gain no good from this companionship.

In the jam factory where I worked, many of the women used "to keep Saint Monday"—that is, they used to drink heavily on Sunday, and be so unfit for work on Monday that they were obliged to stay away, or work half time only.

This work was a terrible experience for me. Some time before I obtained employment in this place I had occasion to assist at a treat a friend was giving for some factory girls. Many of her guests were employed in a jam factory. I had not realised what this meant, and presented twenty tins of the best jam and marmalade obtainable as a small contribution to the feast. On the night, I had the pleasure of hearing one of the girls say:

"Lor, what muck—I ain't goin' to eat none o' that."

I tried to explain that the jam was the most expensive and best I knew of; the girl laughed.

"You doesn't work in a jam factory, miss, ugh!"

The shudder was expressive. Later I thoroughly understood this disgust so openly expressed.

It was not difficult to obtain employment this time, for I had already picked fruits for bottling at a factory, shelled peas, and got a lien, as it were, on work of this sort. The applicants were mostly casual workers, poor in physique and appearance. I was one of the twenty selected. The salary agreed upon was seven shillings a week, and I was engaged for "perhaps" three weeks "regular." It seemed that a "heavy market" was expected, as fruit was plentiful and of a perishable nature.

I went to work at once. The girls passed in file through a

door, and a foreman gave each one a brass tally; these we returned at noon as we passed out, and our numbers were entered in a book to show we had arrived punctually.

The first day I sat on a stool at a table heaped with fruit and "picked" as fast as I could. A big basket stood beside each picker, who tossed the fruit into it as she removed stems and leaves, etc. At intervals men came in and carried away the baskets, leaving others in their place. No talking was allowed. None of the women or girls washed their hands before beginning their work. We had to work at high pressure, and got only half an hour for dinner at midday.

No one complained. Workers in factories do not often complain; there are too many women in the labour market for them to be able to choose the conditions under which they wish to work, especially if they happen to be unskilled workers.

In spite of their unlovely surroundings, the roughest of factory girls have many redeeming features. In this very jam factory, for instance, were two girls who were great "chums." They earned on an average six or seven shillings a week each, and lived together, sharing their possessions like sisters. The younger of these girls, a poor, anæmic creature, fell seriously ill and was obliged to keep her bed. Her companion kept her all through her illness. She was a wild girl and loved the streets, but when her friend was ill she flew home at nights to nurse her. Nobler devotion, or more unselfish service, no woman could render another than this girl rendered her dying friend. One day she fainted in the factory. I found, after many inquiries, that she was actually starving herself in order to provide food and tiny delicacies, such as an orange or whelks, for her friend. The sick girl was too near death to care even for whelks, and when she died, as she did, partly of starvation, her generous friend nearly broke her heart.

It would be leaving out one of the most pronounced attributes of these working girls did I not mention their extraordinary loyalty. In most of their miserable rooms they contrive to have cheap prints of the King and Queen. If ever any of them should have chanced to see the King or Queen, such an one acquires an added dignity among her companions. Now that I have shared their lives and understand them, I realise what splendid citizens might be made of these somewhat reckless and lawless toilers, if one could take them with all their enthusiasms and capacity for devotion and affection, their passionate love of colour and beauty, which has so little vent, their swift, dramatic perception, which might be trained to appreciate noble domestic virtues, and give them the opportunities of a saner, wholesomer life.

Are they so much richer and wiser in America, I wonder, than we are in Great Britain? England is a rich country, yet in America they give their women toilers splendid clubs and fine eating-houses, bright and comfortable places where they can enjoy the companionship of their lovers, brothers, and husbands under happy conditions. I visited scores of such places. They guard their people by such societies as the "Consumers' League"—a League for the supervision of sweating, and the safeguarding of the workers. They shut out of their country, which is so vast that they might well find room for them, the hordes of alien starvelings that we encourage to descend upon our already pressed working people.



## CHAPTER V

### THE BRITISH "JUNGLE"—WHAT I SAW OF THE PRESERVED FOOD TRADE

WHEN I first conceived the idea of enlisting myself in the great army of daily workers in the factories, I did not intend taking part in any reforms other than those which concerned the workers. Indeed, I had no idea of the revelations which work in such places would bring to me. It was long before the agitation in regard to clean food had begun, and I had paid no attention to the matter of food preparation; my chiefest interest lay in the workers of factories, and the stories that I am here going to relate are merely the outcome of personal experience while trying to gain a knowledge of factory girls and their lives. What changes have come over the canning trade since the days of my torment I am not able to say. I obtained, in various ways, employment in many factories of different kinds in and about London, so that my experience is fairly varied. It must not be understood that the places I worked in are typical of all factories, but they certainly are typical of a large number. For instance, I am aware that there are many up-to-date clean and sanitary jam factories. Indeed, I have visited the premises of some of these, and have been a guest of some firms who own great fields and orchards in the country, and whose fruit is beyond reproach. But the proprietors of the jam factories I worked in during my investigations owned no fruit gardens of their



own. They bought in the cheapest markets, and sold in the dearest. There is only one consolation which comes to those who work in such places, and that is that even wealth does not protect people from the dirty and disgustingly manufactured stuffs sent out from these places ; for their sale is not confined to the very poorest classes. It may be some little compensation to the miserable toilers to think that a fine lady, with all the dainty tastes fostered by great wealth and elegant surroundings, may perhaps partake of some preserved delicacy which has been made in filthy and insanitary workshops by suffering and dirty people. It is an unconscious levelling process which brings some small satisfaction when one is almost heart-broken with indignation and helplessness after experiences in such places.

It was early in July, when the fruit season was almost at its height, that I obtained, after a long night out in the London streets with dejected and homeless creatures, a temporary job in a jam factory. It is generally known that there are very stringent factory regulations as to hours, cubic space of air, sanitary arrangements, and so forth. The place I worked in was within the area of the working of these Factory Acts ; but during the few days I was there, never a sign of an inspector did I see, nor indeed, from the conduct of the owners of the place, did I observe much apprehension on their part of raids by Government officials. Things went on in the even tenor of their way. (There were some score or more of women and girls who, like myself, had spent the night wandering the streets of London. This kindly town had offered us no place of refuge where we could have washed or made ourselves in any way decent or fit to take up work in a fruit-preserving factory.) One of the women had some nasty skin disease ; what it was I am not able to say. They were all desperately dirty, and

absolutely unfit to touch food that was meant for human consumption.

As the fruit was brought in almost unexpectedly, and in great quantities, it was necessary that it should be disposed of immediately as the weather prevented its keeping. Strawberries, plums, and raspberries came in daily in enormous quantities. [We were at the factory at seven in the morning, and worked all day, with about ten minutes for food at noon, and another ten minutes about four, till eight o'clock and after, thus exceeding the working limit allowed by the Factory Act. This was done every day while I was in this particular place. Of course, no workers under such circumstances would ever make a complaint, seeing that this was their only plank between death by starvation and a chance of a meagre existence.] The love of life seems so strongly implanted in human beings that they are willing to prolong it even at hideous cost of suffering. One observation which a stranger, coming from what we are pleased to call heathen countries, cannot fail to make in Christian countries, is the almost insane horror of death in their inhabitants. In no country have I seen this exemplified to a greater degree than in England. It is true that the poor possess this fear in a less degree than the well-to-do and better educated, but there is little of that calm expectation of Fate that one finds in the East. [I have often wondered, when working among the poor, and seeing their evil condition, how it is that they do not put an end to their sufferings by death; but rather than that, they endure hunger and cold, awful fatigue and sleeplessness, day after day.]

In the mornings we entered the jam factory and took our places at stools, on either side of which were placed two enormous baskets, the one filled with fruit and the other empty. It was our business to pick, as rapidly as possible,

the stems and leaves from the fruit in the one basket and throw the stuff thus prepared into the other, ready to be carried away to the boiling room.

There was no place in this factory where the workers could wash their hands, nor were there sanitary arrangements of any description. We sat down as we had come out of the street and began work. The baskets of fruit were carried in by men, and sometimes, on days of great pressure, by women, and placed by the side of the stools, and we worked at high speed, the foreman coming along every few minutes to urge us to "Hurry up!" and "Look sharp there!" The heat was so intense that the perspiration poured down the unfortunate workers, and every now and again a woman would put up her hand to dash off the moisture from her forehead and face. The fruit was, of course, not washed. It came to the factory in huge vans, piled high in large baskets. It was the practice of this particular factory to buy at Covent Garden market the second or slightly "off" fruit, which was unsaleable to fruiterers, costermongers, or green-grocers. Owing to the heat and pressure of packing, the fruit often arrived at the factory in a half-fermenting mass; indeed, so bad was it often, that it was impossible to pick out whole fruit. All we could do was to take up the mess by handfuls, pick out any leaves or stems that were prominent, and throw it into the next basket in a sort of pulp.

Now this firm was by no means an unknown or poor one. Not very long ago I noticed with some amusement a case in the papers where several hundredweight of fruit, designed for a factory, was seized by the inspector. A case was made, and the manager appeared in court, dreadfully distressed, of course, that such a thing should have taken place, declaring that it was entirely an accident, and that on arrival at the factory the fruit, when discovered to be in a bad state, would inevitably

have been destroyed. A small fine was inflicted, and the fruit confiscated. No one, of course, took any further notice of the matter. The incident amused me, because it was a common occurrence for fruit to arrive at the factory where I worked in such a state that any decent person would have considered it unfit for human consumption.

Our wages never exceeded seven shillings a week, which was considered an extremely high rate of pay, though the hours of work were sometimes twelve or thirteen. The sugar used in the manufacture of these jams is almost invariably what is called "grape" sugar—that is to say, it is manufactured from beetroot, potatoes, or any other substance yielding sugar, except cane.

Another experience I had was in a marmalade factory. It was a well-advertised concern, and lay not far from London. The chief director of this factory (for it is owned by a small company) is a man of high standing in his church. He is noted for his charity and public beneficence, and indeed, he might well afford this exhibition of piety, since the working of his business costs him so little. In this factory are employed some seventy women and girls, and between thirty and forty men. The women were of a very low class—foul-mouthed and drunken. The men were more respectable, and carried more responsibility. Their wages were not high, but they were engaged chiefly in superintending the work. Every room had a foreman. In all my experience of factory work I have continually heard the same complaint made where men are employed to supervise girls and women. It would not, of course, be polite to retail all that one hears of the evils arising from such a system, but it is sufficient to say that the fact has come to my own knowledge of two girls who, rather than give up their only means of livelihood, submitted to the wishes of the foreman under whom they worked. It is not pleasing to



contemplate the closing chapters of such histories. In the marmalade factory more regard was paid to the hours of work, and as I entered here on what may be called the permanent staff, I did not see so much of dirt among the actual workers. The working space was very limited, and the atmosphere anything but pure, owing to insufficient ventilation. I was never able to find out where the oranges were bought, and I cannot give as authentic the story in common circulation in the factory, that the great quantities of orange peel which I myself saw brought in were swept off the streets. I had no means of verifying this statement, but this I do know, that the oranges which came in great baskets piled one on the top of the other in the company's own vans were often in a state of decay. One morning the consignment of fruit for the day's boiling was so bad that the workers made open jokes about it when the foreman was not too close. One basket of oranges which I had the pleasure of unpacking and counting contained fruit so bruised and crushed down, and evidently of such age, that there was a growth of greeny-white mildew on the top and between each layer. I pointed this out to the foreman, and was promptly told that that was no concern of mine, and that if I could not mind my own business there were "others as could."

The curious part of the food-preserving trade seems to me the marvellous way in which the ingenious owners of these factories can turn out quite nice-looking stuffs from half-decayed and diseased material. Of course there are the usual dyeing and other processes, and these have evidently been brought to such a state of perfection that, in appearance at least, the prepared articles give no hint of their unsavoury origin. This, I think, might be considered a tribute to the progress of modern science in the matter of food adulteration.

I was particularly struck with the brutalising effect factory



life seems to have on married women. These are often of a most degraded type. They are offensive personally, and use vile language. As a rule, their *homes* are miserable hovels. In India and Arabia the conditions among married women in factories are very different to those obtaining in Great Britain. In those heathen countries the married women, who work almost invariably, keep their earnings for themselves. Often the factory workers own a considerable amount of silver jewellery, which is, of course, an Eastern way of saving money. The women who have babies are given an opportunity to feed their little ones, who are brought to the factories. There is no destruction of child-life, or degradation, as there is in Christian countries. The factories too are open and airy places.

After my experiences in the jam and marmalade factories, I sought other places where I might make further investigations, in order that my experiences should not be one-sided.

So it was that during my tours of discovery among the labouring and outcast people, I ventured, among other experiments, upon a term of service in a butcher's shop, and later, in order to learn something of the methods of trade exchange in this country, I became a seeking purchaser of several meat shops, and also of a pork pie shop. It was not with a view to investigating the food trade, however, that I did this, but more with a view to ascertaining the conditions under which girls work in these places, and also to find out for myself some of the fraudulent methods of shop sale and exchange, of which I had heard a good deal at various times. These frauds have been many times exposed in the daily press; it is a matter of common knowledge how the unwary purchaser of a small tobacco store is introduced by an unscrupulous agent and taken over the premises by a wily proprietor. He is shown a few boxes filled with cigars and

cigarettes, a few pounds of tobacco and other goods, which lead him to suppose that the whole stock is *bonâ fide*. When the purchase is complete, the victim discovers either that the back rows of boxes filling the shelves are empty or dummy boxes, or that they contain such inferior brands that the value is depreciated to an almost imperceptible amount.

A friend of mine, the manageress of a well-known club, to whom I was speaking in reference to the catering of this establishment, told me that she was once companion to a rich old lady in the country. The hobby of this woman was farming, and she bred cattle and sheep which she sold at considerable profit. The horrid part of the story, however, was the calm way in which my friend informed me that she never bought foreign meat because, not only was the meat not as economical as really good home-killed meat, but that farmers and others who bred cattle for the market always sold their worst specimens to be killed and offered for public sale as foreign meat. The old lady who employed my friend had an invariable practice, when her sheep or cattle were tuberculous or in any way diseased, of disposing of them at a cheaper price to be sold as foreign meat. My experience of the meat trade in London caused me for a long time to become a vegetarian, and now when I use meat at all, it is only when it is bought at places like the Army and Navy Stores, or similar concerns, which gain no advantage from selling inferior and miscalled offal to the public.

I found it would be very difficult for me really to learn anything about the fraudulent disposal of petty shops unless I entered the market as a purchaser. With the help of a friend, I managed to get into touch with several small meat butchers in and about London, who had businesses for sale. A method I found very effective in managing this was to put an advertisement, stating that I required to buy a small

business, in the weekly journal devoted to the meat trade. I usually had many answers each time, and was thus able to examine the workings of small butchers' businesses in various parts of the town. Then again, I obtained employment, also through the same paper, as book-keeper in a butcher's shop, and it was during this period that I gained my knowledge of one side, at any rate, of the meat trade in this country.

I worked as well in two meat-preserving factories, or rather one factory where preserved meats were prepared, and another where table jellies were manufactured: they were not model factories. At the time, I was filled with disgust and indignation at the way greedy and unscrupulous men made fortunes out of the unsuspecting public, by providing them with vile substitutes for food; but having other work to do at the time, I did not use, except in a casual way, the great mass of information which I was able to collect during this period. As meat is unfortunately the staple food of the British people, I will give a short description here of some of the bye-trades dealing with meat and some of the products supposed to be meat. I deal chiefly, of course, with meat killed and manufactured in this kingdom. With foreign tinned goods I do not concern myself. It is a matter of common knowledge that live cattle are brought over in thousands to this country, chiefly from the Argentine, America, Australia, and New Zealand. The enormous growth of this trade during the last few years may be gathered from these figures.

It was about the year 1876 that the American continent began to supply Britain with "the roast beef of Old England." In that year we imported 5,513 tons only. Last year we received 175,611 tons. Australia began exporting meat about 1881. She sent over first 565 tons, and in 1905 96,518 tons. But the most marvellous increase is that from the Argentine, from where we first imported 19 oxen and 375

sheep ; this was in 1889. In 1900 there were imported into this country 32,079 oxen and 144,573 sheep. The trade was then stopped on account of the foot and mouth disease, and last year we received again 19,643 beasts and 65,493 sheep. Last year's imports from the United States and the Argentine States reached the largest on record. They amounted to 175,611 tons for 1905. Forty-two per cent. of the supply is thus contributed by America, and the Argentine and Australia send 23 per cent., and only 21·7 per cent. is produced in this country.

The number of inspectors of meat in the city of London is eight. Last year there arrived in the London market 415,296 tons. These figures speak for themselves. The inspectors are conscientious men, willing to do the best that lies in their power. The amount of work expected of them renders their office ridiculous. The animals slaughtered in the Metropolitan Cattle Market was 173,904 ; of this number 1,001 animals were condemned as totally unfit for food, at no less than twenty-eight river-side wharves at which food is received. There has lately arisen a custom for the "whole-salers" to send vans direct to these wharves, and have the goods delivered to the retailers direct, thus adding to the difficulties of meat inspection. After having given these illuminating figures, some of my later experiences may not appear so astounding as they might otherwise do.

The meat-packing factory I worked in was owned by a large company and a very rich one. It is run in a name that has been familiar for many years to the British public. Among other abominations which arrived in this factory, were enormous cases of meat, tongues, sheep's hearts, and livers, which were delivered here from America and other places. There is a class of goods which is called facetiously, in the trade, "Bulgarian atrocities." This consists of sheep that



comes from Servia. They are frozen, and often arrive in London in very indifferent condition; indeed, the consignments are of such poor quality that they have earned the title, "Bulgarian atrocities."

On one occasion there came into the factory where I worked four enormous wooden cases containing tongues and sheep's hearts, which were mildewed over, and smelt so fearfully that the odour made one physically sick; the whole air was polluted by the smell from these horrid cases, and yet every scrap of that diseased offal was used in the preparation of potted tongues and savouries of different kinds. It is necessary, during the process of preservation, to season these goods very profusely, and also to use various dyes in order to bring the pulped meat to a proper appearance. Recently, a noted analyst described in the London press how it is possible to preserve and pack animal matter in a state of early decay without causing the tins wherein it is packed to bulge or show any sign of the generation of gases or decomposition. I know, from my own observation of the stuffs packed in this factory, that this statement is absolutely correct, for the food preserved and packed was so effectually doctored that no further decomposition took place, once the tins were hermetically sealed. Large quantities of these preserved materials were sent abroad to firms of quite well-known reputation. The girls and women with whom I worked were case-hardened. They were among the lowest and most miserable specimens of humanity that I have come across. No woman or girl in this particular factory earned more than fifteen shillings a week, and indeed, the average wage was between eight shillings and eleven shillings. (I did not notice any definite disease among the workers, but their bodily condition was so extremely unsavoury and disagreeable that added to the hideous smells of the animal matter that was being



preserved, it rendered life almost intolerable. The air-space for the workers was of course not anything like as great as that prescribed by the Factory Act. Ventilation was insufficient, and the condition of the factory itself insanitary. It is true that in this case they had one domestic office which could be used by the hands. What its original condition was I am unable to say; but owing to the number of people using it, and the character of the people themselves, who are not blessed with any large sense of decency, it became absolutely impossible. In this place, amid a perfect miasma of stench and animal organisms, was prepared food, which was placed upon the market and retailed to the unsuspecting and careless public. How much this individual factory has changed since I worked in it four years ago, I am not able to say; but I am convinced of this, that a leopard would as soon change his spots, as the directors of that particular place would consent to any improvements which entailed the spending of money, unless, indeed, these were forced upon them by the strong hand of the law and a fear of complete exposure.

A coster lad once boasted of how he had bought a bit of meat for a few pence that was worth as many shillings. At a small shop where the meat was exposed for sale, almost on the pavement, he noticed a skewer in a bit of meat that was rotting. This he removed, and taking it to the other side of the counter, stuck it into a good joint. He inquired of the butcher the price of it, and was told its approximate value.

"What!" he said; "three shillings for that offal? Smell it!" He drew out the tainted skewer, the butcher smelt it, and let the lad have the meat for threepence. The question is, Whose morality was worse, the butcher's or the boy's?

In the matter of preserved foods, the responsibility for the sort of goods that are constantly placed on the market is

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divided among so many people that it is difficult to bring home to any particular set, the crime which is undoubtedly perpetrated from day to day. I fancy that the recent public interest aroused in the matter of preserved foods, and the additional vigilance of factory inspectors, will tend greatly towards reform in such matters. But human nature does not change, and unless a constant supervision of all food-preserving factories is kept up, they will, of course, lapse into evil conditions.

On one occasion I took a lodging in a little street where most of the houses were owned by a Polish Jew who rack-rented them. In another room in the same house, there lived a baker with his wife and family. The man had himself, at one time, owned a small baker's shop, but through drink and other misfortune he had contrived to bring himself down to the very dregs of the labour market. To supplement this man's earnings, his wife worked for a Jew sweater—she made button-holes. This baker undertook to introduce me to some of the mysteries of the baking trade, and it was through his instrumentality that I learned the condition of some of the baking houses in London. It is true that these were not of the best class; but it is equally true that people who use cheap tinned meat are not of the richest class either, and surely the customers of the one class are of no less value than the customers of the other. In one big house, which was a sort of underground vault, damp and ill-smelling, there were thirty men employed, all of a very degraded class and exceedingly filthy. The dough was being kneaded with the feet, and the air was so stifling and hot that the perspiration poured down in streams from the men into the dough. There were other abominations in this place which it is hardly possible to describe without trespassing too closely on the indecent.

They habitually used foreign eggs. These were broken indiscriminately into huge troughs, beaten up and used, whatever their condition. The stench from them was absolutely loathsome.

In a baker's shop where I obtained employment in the West End they used eggs which were sent from Holland in great casks—that is to say, the eggs were broken into these casks, and packed in Holland—they were not in their shells such as those that are sent over for household cooking or table use. This is decidedly a trade that ought to be stopped at once, for it was a usual occurrence that these eggs arrived in a semi-decayed state. Of course they were never destroyed, as the loss would have been too great. They were well beaten up, and owing to the flavourings used and the baking they were subjected to, it was remarkable how little apparently bad effect they had on the pastries and cakes they were used for.

In a meat-packing factory, also in London, I saw tongues and pork that came in for pressing and to make brawn, actually in such a decayed condition that they were falling to pieces, and the smell was shocking. [In this factory we were paid shamefully low wages, and we constantly worked longer hours than the law allows. The staff was reinforced in the heavy season by relays of tramps from the gutters and riverside. Their usual bodily condition was offensive and beyond description. These people were employed to handle the food which the British public paid a good price for without requiring any assurance as to its purity and fitness for consumption. For myself, with my intimate knowledge of some of these factories, I would inquire very particularly as to the brand of preserved food I was invited to consume, and would need an assurance that the factory where it was manufactured was open to any of the public who cared to

visit it. I venture to say, an exceedingly small percentage of the manufacturers of food stuffs would dare to invite unexpected or frequent inspection of their premises, employees, and materials by the public or by Government officials.

## CHAPTER VI

### ACROSS THE "HERRING POND"—MY AMERICAN EDUCATION— THE AMENITIES OF CHICAGO

DURING my social and professional travels on the Continent and in Britain, I met a good many Americans, and received several invitations to visit America. This I had always wished to do. Indeed, it had been a question, before I came to England, of deciding between London, Boston, and Paris for my professional education. The choice turned on London for various reasons, and I have no cause to complain of the consequences, but there had always existed the desire to visit America. I am afraid that my ideas of this great country were, in spite of a great deal of reading, rather the ideas of the average Britisher. It was the country of "I guess," and "I calculate," and "Uncle Tom's Cabin"; of Abraham Lincoln and pumpkin pies, dentists and women's colleges which gave degrees that we knew very little about in other parts of the world. Still, the desire to see the new continent was strong in me, and when the Women's Temperance Union of America and Canada gave me an invitation to speak at their Convention at Cincinnati, and to give a recital there to several thousands of their members from other parts of the world, and when my agent in London advised me to go on a preliminary trip, promising to do what he could for me, I desired to avail myself of the



opportunity of trying my fate in this great world. Unfortunately, however, though the promises of work and welcome seemed fair enough, I had not the necessary capital to make so expensive an experiment. One day, about that time, I was working extremely hard, and got a sudden attack of illness. A dear friend who had asked me to come and spend Sunday with her was put off with a note in which I explained that I was not good company and was unfitted to see anyone. Shortly after, she arrived at my lodgings and carried me by storm. Now this lady belongs to the aristocracy of England; she has a title, but is not rich; she had already been extremely kind to me, and had given me valuable introductions. During the conversation she drew from me the real cause of my distress—the fact that I did not dare to risk my small capital on a trip to America. She insisted on having a cab there and then and taking me off to her house, and that afternoon she gave me a cheque for £100, saying: “Return it when you can, my dear; of course we must do our best to help each other in this life.” She knew she had nothing to gain from me, and she was not a rich woman. The love and honour in which I hold her for that kindness has inspired some of my best efforts, and I hope my subsequent success justified her confidence in me.

I went to America knowing only three people whom I was likely to meet; when I returned, five and a half months later, I had visited seventy homes of people, from millionaire to mechanic, and had travelled several thousands of miles, finding everywhere friends and welcome and the warm-hearted hospitality which is the characteristic of this magnificent country. From New York, where I stayed in turn with four friends, I went to Evanston, near Chicago. This delightful town is called the Athens of America. It is

a town of colleges and a community of travelled and cultivated people, than whom I never met any more charming. I gave several recitals in the State of Illinois, and while there, entered into a contract with a Lyceum Bureau for three seasons' recitals in America, each season to last twelve weeks consecutively in each year. Subsequent illness and my marriage, however, altered my plans, and I have yet to renew my acquaintance with the American public from the platform, with now a new bond of friendship, since my husband has represented America for twenty-five years in Muscat Arabia. While here, I was introduced to Mrs. Milward Adams, whose husband is manager of the Chicago Auditorium, which is famed as being one of the largest and most perfectly-constructed opera houses and concert halls in the world. Mrs. Adams has a studio at the Auditorium Hotel for the study of expression, voice-culture, and gesture. She has lectured, by the invitation of the French Government, in Paris, and by invitation also in St. Petersburg. She is one of the most brilliant of American women. To her classes came all manner of people from all parts of the world. They are open, and all strangers are welcome, provided they are really interested. Mrs. Adams stands on a small platform in front of her audience and lectures. Then the students are called out, one here, and one there, to read or recite various passages, to demonstrate by gesture some striking passage, or to give examples of inflection on various words. Mrs. Adams did me the compliment of asking me to speak to her students. I did so with much diffidence, and she was to me, from that day, one of the best friends I had in America. By invitation of Professor M'Coluch, I also gave a lecture to the students in the beautiful School of Oratory at the University of Evanston, and in several of the Universities and Colleges.

In Chicago is located the settlement which is organised and maintained by another lady of similar name, though having no connection with Mrs. Milward Adams. Miss Adams is a well-known student of sociology. She kindly invited me to visit the settlement which is placed in an extremely poor district in this city of evil reputation. A visit to the settlement is a liberal education in the making of citizens. Here is a workmen's restaurant, so delightfully appointed, so well equipped, so cheap and so comfortable, that any worker or artisan drawing an ordinary wage would find himself better catered for than the average city man in London.

The people of Chicago are most appreciative of anything beautiful or artistic. One of the plans in the University settlement, which also I visited, is to educate the young children to a sense of the beautiful, and to cultivate mind and eye to an appreciation of "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely and of good report."

On a certain day in each week a lady attends in the book-lending room; here are stored copies—engravings and prints, of all the most beautiful masterpieces in the world. Also pictures of flowers and plants and lovely places, all beautifully executed. These pictures are in cheap frames, arranged with ribbons or rings for hanging up, and they are lent out to the children for a week, at the end of which time the little ones bring back these treasures, and the lady generally questions them to see what ideas they have gathered from the picture. Some of the remarks and thoughts elicited are most quaint and amusing. Each little borrower is then given a new picture, and so they are taught to educate both eye and mind. One extraordinary thing about these children, who,

by the way, are almost all foreigners, is the fact that in the one generation they are transformed from wild little savages into bright and intelligent citizens. One of the workers introduced me to a Polish family. The father and mother could speak only about six words of broken English. They had a tiny store of money, and were wholesome, and considering that they were Polish, not very dirty. They themselves had had no education, and belonged to the unskilled labouring classes. They came to America with two children, a boy and a girl, and two others, both boys, were born to them after their arrival in the United States. They lived in one room in a mean street in Chicago, the father working as parcels man in a "dry goods store." This man took advantage of the free education offered for his children. I saw his little girl at a dancing class held in the settlement, and his boys attended, besides the usual day school, evening classes, where one learnt the violin, one wood-carving, and another, having a perfect passion for pictures, was being taught drawing. These children all spoke English perfectly, with a fine American accent, and were healthy and thriving-looking. They gave every promise of making admirable citizens, yet they were the children of immigrants who could neither read nor write. So much for the work of the American public schools and the settlements which are established in the mean places of nearly all large American cities. Whatever the evils rampant in America, and we are well acquainted with these, for it is human nature to delight to dwell on the sins and shortcomings of our neighbours, magnificent tribute might justly be paid to the American charity which is practical, and I might almost say gilt-edged, for it is so munificent.

On one occasion, I was invited to give a recital for the benefit of a local charity in a town about three hours distant from New York. One wholesome trait about American



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charity is, that when they ask entertainers or lecturers and other artistes to help in their philanthropic schemes, they do not expect them to be the donors of the entire entertainment. They are actuated by a sentiment of justice, and are willing to pay the people who thus help them to raise money. It is quite a matter of choice whether an entertainer cares to give his services for nothing, for if he is of good repute, and his work appreciated, he will always be able to demand a fee, even at a charity entertainment. At one of these places, I found myself at the end of the journey met by a lady and her husband, who brought their sleigh for me. The temperature was below zero, and the snow lay thick on the ground. We were well wrapped up in furs, and I was driven to the outskirts of a little American town, there to find myself hospitably received in a small and comfortable house, a typical American home of a well-to-do working man. The recital was for the benefit of a Home for the orphan children of workmen, mechanics, and others, and I was entertained by the Secretary of the Home. He was a man engaged as an electric engineer in one of the great works of New York. All his spare time was devoted to the interests of this Orphan Home. The little *menage* where I found myself installed gave me a delightful idea of the prosperity and comfort enjoyed by America's working people. The house itself was the usual wooden structure common to all American towns. It contained only two storeys. Below was a large basement, in which the central furnace was kept burning day and night—the man himself attended to this. The house was warmed with hot air throughout, and was admirably comfortable, there being no draughts or chilly passages anywhere. The woman had clothes which in England would have been worn only by a lady who was accustomed to buy her things from some great West End firm, and I found afterwards that, with the



help of an occasional dressmaker, she made almost all her own clothes. The entire cooking and house-work was done by the lady herself. The breakfast was served at a quarter to seven in the morning, and the day I was there it consisted of fish balls, such as one might get in England at the Carlton or Savoy; two kinds of hot bread, delicious coffee, grape fruit, several kinds of preserves, and the inevitable buckwheat cakes with maple syrup. I asked my hostess how she had managed to provide such an excellent meal so early in the morning without confusion or trouble of any kind. She took me into the kitchen and showed me how it was arranged with all conveniences for modern cookery and time-saving appliances, and she told me that she prepared most of the food the night before.

We are so apt in this country to think of American women as people who neglect their homes and their husbands, while they dress up in fine clothes and go about spending the men's hard-earned money. My visit, however, to the seventy American homes, certainly dissipated any such false impression. America is essentially a country of splendid housewives. On one other occasion I stayed in New York as guest in the house of one of the old American families. It was a beautifully-appointed dwelling, and contained some priceless art treasures. The father was a great mill-owner, a man of charming and genial disposition. There were two girls, one extremely pretty, and they each took charge of the house by turns. Every morning one of the daughters breakfasted with her father before eight o'clock, for though he was several times a millionaire he was always in his office by nine o'clock every morning, and did not return home till six. The daughters had travelled all over Europe and America, and had been to Japan. They were both splendidly

educated, and yet their housekeeping capacity was delightful to see.

One other characteristic of American families which strikes a stranger visiting the country in such an intimate way as I did, is the beautiful friendship that exists between fathers and their daughters. The American man seems to make real companions of his women-folk, and to hold them in much chivalrous respect. The girls are usually given equal educational privileges with the sons, and being a new country, there is no rule of entail, nor is it usual for the eldest son to inherit the entire property to the almost total exclusion of the younger sons and the daughters. A father's property in America is divided on a just basis between all his children. Thus the country benefits, and women are at once put on a higher plane.

A unique experience was the visit I paid of about three days to the Martha Washington Hotel in New York, which is the only women's public hotel in the world. Like all new ventures, even in go-ahead America, it was considered something of a risk to devote an hotel entirely to the use of women. No men are received as guests there ; the place is always full, and commercially it has justified its existence. All the appointments and arrangements are such as one would meet with at a first-class general hotel in England ; in fact, there are a great many improvements which one does not meet with in the older country. There are hair-dressing saloons, newspaper stalls, telegraph and telephone offices, typewriting offices where a stenographer may be hired by the hour or day, public dining and coffee-rooms, a florist's shop, and all the usual appurtenances of civilisation found in the one building.

My experimental mind at once conceived the idea of a similar hotel in London, which, if carried out on the same

excellent plan as the Martha Washington, might be made to pay magnificently, for there is no place in the world to which more unattached females come than to this great city. Besides the annual visitors, there are, of course, thousands of women working for their daily bread, for whom there is but meagre and most unsatisfactory accommodation in this city. It would, however, require some education to bring the British mind to realise that it would be well for her working women to have a place where they might obtain perfect comfort and independence. There is inherent in the English mind a deep-rooted idea that all women should be kept in a certain amount of tutelage. This would be extremely advantageous, no doubt, were they not obliged to bear so many public burdens, and to earn not only their own living, but often to support relations.

Although I got as far as Milwaukee and Chicago in the west, I was not able to go further south than Baltimore in Maryland. Here I stayed with friends, and one of the daughters of the house was organising a *fête* in aid of what she called the "George Junior Republic." I inquired as to what this might mean, and the inquiries led me to visit one of the most interesting places in the United States.

This Junior Republic was formed after the model of one started by Mr. George, a philanthropist and student of sociology in New York State. The object was to take boys and girls, chiefly those who would have been condemned, perhaps to prison or punishment, under what we should here term the First Offenders' Act, and place them in a colony where, to all intents and purposes, they were, as one might say, pioneers of their own fates. It was a marvellous idea to give to these young people a feeling of responsibility and citizenship, and the plan has worked out satisfactorily.

To this Junior Republic come lawless young spirits who are

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treated like rational human beings. Every boy is expected to do a certain amount of work for his food, clothes, and maintenance. They have a Court-house, in which offenders are tried by their peers—that is to say, the judge and jury are chosen from among the boys of the community, and they apportion and inflict the punishment.

In the different houses where the boys and girls are located, there are grown-up citizens, men and women of means, who have given up their own comfortable homes in order to live with and among these young people, helping them and training them for citizen duties. The "Citizens" are paid in the special coin of the Junior Republic, and all take a share in the daily work, whether in the house, in the fields, workshops, laundries, or any other avocation necessary to civilisation.

There was a feeling of wonderful enthusiasm and comradeship about the whole place. All the young citizens seemed to know each other, as did also the adult members of the community, and a spirit of friendliness and prosperity pervaded the atmosphere. By this sensible method, boys and girls who might otherwise have turned out to be criminal, and a burden to the State, were converted into self-respecting and useful citizens. I was told that the effect on unruly characters of this government by other young people was wonderfully advantageous. A boy who, under chastisement and discipline by adult strangers, would probably become morose or savage, would, if condemned to punishment by a committee of boys in the Republic, take his punishment manfully, and set to work to redeem his character. There was not that sense of injury and desperation which is engendered by the administration of the adult criminal law.

Here, in England, on one occasion, in conjunction with a girl friend, I helped to organise an entertainment on behalf of



the Police Court Home for boys, which is carried on by a branch of the Church of England Temperance Society. This Home is situated at Yiewsley. A Police Court missionary is often successful in preventing a first offender being branded as a criminal with a sentence of imprisonment, by undertaking himself that the boy shall be kept under supervision at such a Home as Yiewsley. The lads there are taught all manner of useful crafts, and encouraged in every way to become self-supporting, useful, and respectable, and a more excellent work one can hardly find than this, which, to the benefit of all decent citizens, takes young hooligans and destitute lads and gives them a chance of becoming decent men. There is not, however, anywhere in England, not even at any of the colonies supported by the Salvation Army, anything at all analogous to the George Junior Republic in America. We still keep to the more old-fashioned methods.

One other social reform in which America has taken the lead, is the separate court for the trial of child offenders. It was my privilege in Philadelphia to be the guest of the lady who was the President of the Mothers' Congress, and was, I think, instrumental in gaining for the country the Government's sanction for the Child Courts. I believe now the trials are not open to the public, and this is a very wise improvement. I was fortunate, however, in being present on the occasion when a boy of about twelve years was tried on a charge of theft. It was his first offence, and the circumstances of the case were pathetic. The little fellow, it seemed, was a newspaper boy, and accustomed to earn a small sum of money regularly. He, however, met with an accident which prevented his getting about quickly, and he lost his work. He had two little sisters and a crippled mother, and it made a difference in the tiny home whether the boy earned money or not. Being led away by bad example, he fell into temptation, and stole a dollar



from a newspaper counter where a customer had put it down in payment of a bill. The little fellow was terribly frightened when he entered the court, and seemed like a hunted animal, casting terrified looks all round. The judge came in, and without ceremony or formality of any kind he sat down in a chair, and putting out his hand, drew the boy close to him. He spoke to the child long and earnestly, showed him the dreadful consequences of crime, and asked him whether he would like to disgrace his little sisters, and have people in the streets point to his poor old mother and say: "That woman's son is a thief in prison." It was a wonderful lesson to see the wise, calm way in which this gentleman dealt with the child. The boy was in tears and perfectly heart-broken. He promised never to offend again, and instead of being sentenced to prison and branded as a criminal, he was made over to a settlement such as I have described, where the authorities guaranteed his good behaviour. The case of the mother and sisters was inquired into and relief was afforded them. Thus one family was saved from disgrace and criminality.

During the time of my visit to Baltimore, the weather was extremely cold, indeed the temperature was often below zero; but I gave several recitals in the city, and having an introduction from a friend of the President's I went to Washington to see Mr. Roosevelt. Mr. Shaffer, who had entertained Mr. Roosevelt in Evanston, and who was one of the most kindly friends I had made in America, had made an appointment through Mr. Loeb, the President's secretary, for me to be received at the White House. Washington was white with snow when I presented myself at the President's residence, and there were waiting in the public hall several dozens of people, besides newspaper men, Senators from distant states, and various ladies who were bent on seeing the President for some purpose or another. The collection of females impressed

me most. They were nearly all old, and rather unattractive—good people, no doubt—who were waiting to make the President's life a burden to him by demanding the instant suppression, say, of corsets, or false hair, or patent medicines, or some such reform as they panted after. They all seemed weighed with enormous responsibilities, and it taxed my chaperon's patience and temper to keep them from questioning me with particular minuteness as to all my affairs. Presently one of the President's secretaries came out, and announced that Mr. Roosevelt would be glad to see me. I had purposely put on a very pretty dress, and I went in with some misgiving, for I had no business with the President; but when I entered he received me with a cordial hand-shake, and said he was very pleased to see me. My dress seemed to please him, and when I apologised for taking up his time, not having the excuse of real business, he smiled, and said he was very glad of a little break.

The President is a fine, strongly-built man, with a rough-hewn, honest face, and a very strong one too. Nobody who has ever seen Mr. Roosevelt could feel anything but the most cordial admiration and respect for him. He is so simple and straightforward in his manner, so kindly and so unaffected. His whole appearance gives one the impression of strength and wholesomeness, both of body and mind. I heard some delightful stories of the President's home-life, and how he is adored by his children. The White House is an unpretentious place, rather like a good country house. There are several beautiful apartments in it, all tastefully but very simply furnished; there is no ostentation or display. One of the most interesting personages on the White House staff whom I saw was an old attendant who had been a servant of the former Presidents McKinley and Cleveland. He had many amusing stories to tell of the receptions and other functions

held in the White House. He gave us the information that Mrs. Cleveland's receptions were the most crowded that had ever taken place there, and amusingly described how the people had to be pushed and pulled along in order that the crowds might be passed through quickly enough on reception evenings.

One characteristic that must strike every visitor to America is the extreme courtesy extended to all strangers by public officials. At every place—not only at Washington, but at every other city that I visited—the officials were exceedingly considerate and helpful, and most of them went out of their way to show me courtesy, and help me to understand and enjoy sight-seeing in their cities.

The American newspapers are the bewilderment and despair of all new-comers. I remember one morning asking for a paper at a public stall, and being handed over a great pile of printed matter and pictorial advertisement. I explained carefully that I wanted only *one* paper—I seemed to have been presented with about three dozen—but the man informed me that it all was only one Sunday paper, and I had the benefit of it for five cents. Of course one has to live in a country for a little while before knowing exactly what papers one is likely to read with pleasure and with confidence. I had necessarily a good deal to do with American journalists, although I avoided as much as possible interviews and paragraphs in the papers, because I wished to reserve these things until I had a better acquaintance with the country, and was visiting it for a longer period in a public way. However, the interviewers haunted the hotels and houses where I stayed, and it was very difficult to avoid them. I found them pleasant enough, and if they asked me any question I did not wish to answer, I merely said I did not consider it a subject that would interest the public. Of course I suffered,

like every visitor to the States, by having things imputed to me which I was not responsible for at all. My lectures and speeches were often reported not quite correctly. On one occasion, in a Western State, the papers came out with an enormous head-line, saying that I considered the American women neither beautiful nor clever. I had never, of course, said anything of the kind. What I had said was, that I had met as beautiful women in England, and certainly just as clever ones as I had met in America, which was perfectly true.

I was entertained by some of the leading women's clubs, and had an opportunity of noting the differences of social life in America and in this country. In America the women's clubs are all more or less what we should call in this country societies or associations. Each club is organised and maintained, not for specific social purposes, as most of the clubs in England are, but with some definite philanthropic or more serious object in view, and in these clubs are born most of the ideas which bear fruit in the shape of social reforms. For instance, the Consumers' League, which is a large organisation composed of women of every grade of society, was begun in one of the women's clubs, and it was in a club in Chicago that I first heard an account of its work. The members bind themselves to buy no articles which are manufactured under sweated conditions, and houses where work is done are under supervision, and are granted special licenses for the purpose. They also bind themselves not to shop after certain hours, and to abstain from purchasing anything from shops which employ sweated labour. It need hardly be pointed out what a boon such an organisation is, and what splendid fruit its work has borne. Most of the clubs meet at the great hotels or public buildings. They give luncheons or dinners, to which strangers are invited. In Philadelphia the



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New Century Women's Club has a fine building of its own, and in Chicago the Athletic Club, where I gave a recital in aid of one of the hospitals, is a splendid building. These clubs are not used only for social purposes, as we use our clubs in England.

In New York and the "East" I was begged not to express my admiration for the "West." Chicago was not to be mentioned in polite society! As a matter of fact, I enjoyed the "West" extremely, and admired the bright, kindly "Westerners." I was obliged to explain, in self-defence, that to a *Far Easterner* such as myself, there was no perceptible difference in people who lived in a town one hundred years old and those who lived in one two hundred years old. As to American accents—New York folk pride themselves on their voices and tones, and sneer at "Western" people. To a stranger, however, the difference in accents is hardly noticeable.

All states are alike in one thing, and that is, the kindly hospitality shown to visitors. American men are perhaps the most gallant on earth. Their ideal of women is so high that they are not afraid to fall in love with a girl at first sight and propose to her "right away." Being only a girl myself, I simply loved all the delightful attentions that were shown me. I wished I could have brought home some of the wondrous Beauty Roses with which I was welcomed in most of the places where I visited. We have nothing like them in England. The "candies," too, were in a girl's parlance "dreams." Paris itself can show none better. Americans are extremely fond of sweets and bombard their guests with them, which is really a most pleasant habit.

I returned to New York in order to take my passage for England, as I had engagements to fulfil in this country. It so happened, however, that instead of being able to return



by the line which had brought me out, I was obliged to take a boat of another line in order to fulfil a last engagement in New York and keep my first one of the season in this country. It was a fearfully cold day, and ice lay thick in the streets. The cabman had to get off the box and lead the horse step by step. Every now and then the unfortunate animal seemed to slip back three or four steps, and I began to despair of ever reaching my boat. However, encouraged by a large bribe, the cabby did manage to get me to the wharf in time. I found several friends on board waiting for me, and my cabin was sweet with flowers. There were numbers of parcels containing parting gifts which had been sent to me by thoughtful friends. We started fairly enough, and the next day we were able to sit out on deck. The third day, however, some of the machinery seemed to have gone wrong, and we had to slow down. However, we eventually got to Plymouth, and those passengers who had decided to take rail there were indeed fortunate, though at the time, when watching them embark in fearfully swaying boats in a heavy sea, we congratulated ourselves that we were going to land at a more convenient harbour. Before putting into Southampton, we had to land some passengers and mails at Cherbourg. About three o'clock in the morning, we were awakened by a dreadful shock to the vessel, which nearly flung us out of our berths. All the furniture in the cabins rattled, and the trunks broke away and rolled about on the floors. I waited for a few minutes to see if there would be any fresh shocks or sign of confusion. I heard passing and repassing of people, and went to my cabin door to inquire the reason of the excitement. A steward facetiously informed me that the captain had got tired of the sea-voyage and was taking an overland route. It appears that through some

fault of the pilot, or through some mismanagement, we had touched the rocks off Cherbourg, and a large hole was stove in the ship, but we were able to proceed very slowly towards Southampton. Near the Isle of Wight, we found ourselves in a somewhat thick fog, and as we were at lunch, another dreadful shock caused us to rise hastily from the table and hurry on deck. An extraordinary sight met our eyes: our boat had collided with a troopship which was leaving Southampton. Both vessels of course backed apart; there was an awful splintering of wood, and fearful, jarring sounds, and we were afforded a view of the interiors of some of the cabins of the unfortunate vessel we had run into. A great spike on our boat brought away a portmanteau from one of the cabins. We all thought, of course, that the end of the vessel had come, and indeed for a few minutes it was feared that the troopship would go down. Fortunately, however, the watertight and other compartments saved the vessel, and she was able to put back slowly into dock. We did not arrive at Southampton till late that afternoon, having been due in the morning. Naturally, all waiting friends had grown extremely anxious, and we were glad enough to put foot on the shores of dear old England again.

A friend met me and brought, as a welcome, a big bunch of primroses. The sight and sweet, tender perfume of them touched me as no foreign sight had done. It was good to be home.



MY YOUNGEST CUSTOMER.



OLD WOMAN PICKING OAKUM IN A CASUAL WARD.



## CHAPTER VII

### LITTLE SISTER SORROW

IN connection with my American experiences, I might here tell a little story of two citizens of the great Republic I met under curious circumstances in London.

I had been making a lecturing tour in some of the great Provincial cities, and on my way home had occasion to change my train and take the underground at Cannon Street. While waiting, I noticed an old lady who was wandering somewhat close to the edge of the platform. She was small and a little bent, and wore a neat, tiny black bonnet and a very trim black dress with a little fur cape. I began speculating somewhat vaguely as to her history and circumstances, as one does when waiting idly about among streams of humanity which come and go. Suddenly, with a shrill shriek, a train came in, and the old lady either lost her balance or was startled into a false step, and almost fell over the platform. I was just able to grab her cloak and pull her back; she tumbled down, and in doing so, hurt her ankle. With a little difficulty I managed to help her up and support her to the waiting-room, where she sank into a chair as if very faint and tired.

After a little time I asked her whether she would like me to accompany her part of the way home. She told me she was waiting for a friend, but that she must have missed her for she had been due two hours ago. She therefore made up



her mind to return home, and I found that her way lay partly with mine if we went by 'bus. Before proceeding on our journey, however, we went to one of the little tea shops in a street near by the station, and as we had some refreshment the dear old lady told me something of her life. I happened to say that I had been attending a Social Service Convention in Birmingham. She put out her hands and took both of mine, and with tears in her eyes, prayed that God would bless every effort made to check drink and gambling—the fearful evils which had wrecked so many lives. Something in her manner struck me that there was a personal reason for her earnestness, and she so attracted me that I travelled with her from Cannon Street about two miles north. She told me that her goodman had a little boot store, and that they prospered fairly well, but when she named the locality I wondered how anyone so respectable, with such sweet and refined speech, had come out of a place of such evil repute, for I knew the street she mentioned to be one of the worst in London. I asked her if there was any particular reason for her having chosen that locality, and told her that I myself was very keenly interested in the lives of the outcast and poor. She said very little, but before parting she asked if I would come some day to see her, and I gladly promised to do so. She wrote her address in my pocket-book, and on looking at the writing I knew its characteristics. It was the polished, rather ornate writing of an old-fashioned American lady, the fine hair-strokes with the full pen dashes being always recognisable in this special school of caligraphy. I have never seen writing resembling this done by any except the older generation of American ladies.

I began puzzling in my mind as to who and what my charming old friend could be, for all the while she had been speaking, I had noticed something unusually quaint and

unfamiliar in her accent. She was not a foreigner, so far as I could tell by the accent, nor an American, yet she certainly was not altogether English, but how to place the accent exactly I could not tell. It was several months after this little adventure before I found time to renew the acquaintance, and then one day I sent a post-card to the address she had given me, and there came back a neat little note asking me to meet the writer at a certain free library. Had it not been for the spice of adventure in my nature, I hardly think I should have ventured, for there seemed something odd in the invitation, but of course I knew that there could be no evil designs on me, as a public library is not a place anyone would choose for malpractices of any kind. I presented myself at the appointed hour, and there was my old lady waiting. After a cordial hand-clasp she drew me out into the hall.

"We must not talk in the reading-room," she said, "for fear of disturbing the people, but I wanted to explain to you, my dear, that had I not been attracted by your interests in our brothers and sisters who suffer, I would not have asked you to come to-day. I do not think it right to take you to my place without warning you that it is not a choice or savoury locality."

I assured the old lady that I had already been aware of that fact, and added that I should much enjoy seeing her home.

"Well," she said, "I shall be glad to take you there myself."

It was an autumn evening, and a cold mist was gathering round the city. Never shall I forget the journey there, through dark and narrow streets, through miles of hideous brick buildings of the same form and description which go to make up the poorer streets of London. Part of the way we

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went by omnibus, and part we had to walk. Presently we turned up a street more unsavoury and narrow and ugly-looking than the rest, and after walking between rows of narrow, grim-looking houses, we at last turned into a little courtyard into which several buildings opened. We crossed this and ascended some rickety stairs, and presently my companion opened a door on the third landing and we entered a cosy little room. There was about it an atmosphere of home; the walls were washed with a pretty blue paint, and were decorated with pictures in neat dark frames, which made a pretty effect. At the fire was sitting an old man, and he rose as we entered. The little lady said :

“John, this is the young lady I spoke to you of, who saved me from falling under the train.”

He came forward and grasped my hand warmly.

“You are very welcome,” he said ; “but I hope Elizabeth told you where you would find yourself, for it would not be fair to bring strangers down here.”

I assured him I was very pleased to come, and was in no way disturbed by the strangeness of my surroundings.

Away bustled the old lady, and in a few minutes she had laid a white cloth on the table and prepared a charming little tea. We all sat down, and for an hour or more we conversed on various subjects, and I gathered that my new friends had come originally from America. It was certainly not a part of the world where I had expected to find citizens of the great Republic, and it was my introduction to one of the strangest experiences that have befallen me in my life. It was the beginning of many visits which I paid to that locality. For three years I constantly visited these people, and was introduced by them to some of the strangest specimens of humanity. The little home exists no longer, so that the telling of this story can wound no tender hearts nor violate any confidence.

Had my old lady been alive I would have kept silence even now, but the last link that bound me to her in friendship was severed when I stood in a corner of one of those enormous cemeteries where thousands of London's people go to rest, trying to coax from a little mould of earth a draggle-tailed, rough-looking girl who had fallen across it, weeping her heart out. In answer to my pleading that she should come away, the girl said indignantly :

“Don't you think she's worth a few tears? There ain't anyone likely to take her place.”

The story of this old couple makes one of the romances of this strange city of London. They had been people of some consequence and a good deal of wealth in Boston, and they had one son, who was to them as the apple of their eye. This lad was a graduate of Yale, he had been in Heidelberg and had spent two years at Oxford. He had made the grand tour, and finally returned to Boston to take his place as partner in his father's business. While there he fell in love with the daughter of one of the leading citizens, a girl who eventually would inherit several million dollars. The young man had no expectation of enormous wealth, although he would be comfortably enough provided for. But the girl's parents considered that their wealth was enough to purchase a title for their daughter, and they looked unfavourably on the young couple's fondness for each other. By-and-by the girl went to Europe, and one day, while at breakfast, the young man gave an exclamation of pain, and the mother, looking up, saw that the paper he had been reading had dropped from his hand, and he had fallen back in his chair almost fainting. The paper contained an account of the young lady's engagement to an English peer, and described her *fiancé's* ancestral home and the splendid prospects that awaited her. Her jilted lover left home, and being a lad of a weak character, he allowed despair to prey on



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him, and took to drink and cards. Nothing that the love of his parents could devise was successful in inducing him to return to normal ways, and at last when the crash came, it was found that he had pledged his father's credit to the hilt, and forged the name of a prominent man in Boston. He was tried and sent to prison. The long years of discipline seemed to strengthen his character, and he returned to his faithful parents assuring them of his determination to redeem the past.

He went, followed by many prayers, to one of the Southern States, and lost himself in one of those great cities whose very vastness and remoteness has enabled many a man before and since to bury his past and begin life again with new hope. The young man prospered wonderfully, and became a prominent citizen in the place he had chosen for his reincarnation. All went well till the devil sent there one winter a party of Boston society people on a pleasure trip. At a ball that was given in the city the young man met a lady who had known him and his parents in Boston. His heart turned to ice within him. She appeared friendly enough, and he led her aside and made an appeal to her chivalry, begging that she would forget she had ever met him before.

One might have supposed that a Christian gentlewoman in the nineteenth century would have possessed decency enough to regard such a request as sacred. She knew the history of the case, she plied the man with impertinent questions, and the poor wretch supplied her with all the information she asked for with a sympathetic air. Two days after, the whole town was in possession of the man's history, and every door was closed to him. He returned to his parents at Boston. I heard the story from his mother long years after, in that little room in a mean street in London, and even then my heart froze as I seemed to see the awful agony those three people had endured. The mother and the father striving to



find some means whereby their son could again begin life, and his utter despair and determination to end it all. This is by no means a singular tragedy, resulting from that hateful love of scandal and gossip, which, alas ! even gentlewomen cannot forbear to indulge in. This hateful and sordid passion for evil-speaking has ruined many a life. The lad's parents spent awful nights of waiting, with a burning horror at heart, listening for the footsteps mounting the stairs, and wondering at what dread hour the report of a pistol and the dull thud of a falling body might tell of the end of the tragedy. The young fellow waited about for a couple of weeks. His mother, facing the inevitable, had pleaded by all the love she bore him, that if he must make an end, it should be where they might care for him after. When it came she was prepared, and after all was over they sold their small possessions and left their native country for ever, to settle in London, where they sought, if possible, to drown their grief amid new surroundings and other scenes.

For the love they bore this unfortunate son of theirs, the old lady and her husband determined that they would spend their lives for other lads who had been tempted, and had fallen as he had done. By degrees they came to know London exceedingly well, and step by step they found themselves in possession of the confidence of some of the most dreadful characters about their neighbourhood. The better to serve these people, they took a small shop in the very midst of this slum, and there the old man plied his trade as a shoemaker, while his wife helped him by keeping the house. Their home was the rendezvous of the outcast and criminal in the district. Below their living-rooms, opening on to the courtyard, was the tiny shop, and behind that again was a large room with a sunken floor, which had doubtless at some time been used as a sort of store-place or small warehouse.

Here were arranged some rough benches and tables, and nightly there was gathered into this room a strange medley of humanity. The old lady provided a cup of tea and slice of cake for each person, and the old man talked to the strange guests or read them interesting topical articles from the papers that might command their interest.

It was the most extraordinary gathering. There were thieves and pick-pockets, girls and women associated with them, violent anarchists, and all those wild and desperate characters who hide themselves like beasts by day, and emerge in the darkness from their lairs.

It was a usual custom when the old lady and her husband had need to walk about in the neighbourhood at night, that some one or two of the strange company formed a bodyguard for them.

Here I heard discussed plans for the annihilation of the rich, murderous diatribes, and gloomy remarks made by men whom crime and want had driven to desperation. It seemed to me that we trod on a volcano when we placed ourselves within the power of these dreadful people ; but never once, by manner or speech, did anyone of them betray anything but respect and affection for the two old people who had come to dwell among them. I asked my two friends how it was that they could keep silence amid the fearful vapourings of these dreadful men, and look kindly upon women degraded out of all semblance of humanity. They explained to me that the little back room in the stuffy courtyard was, in their opinion, a sort of safety-valve, and that where men and women were able to talk and relieve themselves of their grievances, and find sympathy and kindness, there was less likelihood of a violent explosion. There was one girl who came with unfailing regularity to these meetings. She was called "Saucy Poll," and the old lady gave me an outline of

her history. She was "in with" some of the worst characters among the thieves, and rather gloried in being unafraid of the police. One peculiar characteristic this girl had astonished us. Outcast herself, and owing nothing to society, she yet had a most romantic attachment to the Queen and the "Prince of Wiles," as she called him; the reason of this loyalty I was never able to fathom. She was, however, on one occasion, through the influence of the old lady, instrumental in saving the life of the Prince of Wales, or at any rate in frustrating an attempt on his life. The Prince of Wales, now our King, was going to dine one night at a mansion in Park Lane. Great preparations had been made for this dinner, and a secret plot had been formed by some red-handed anarchists to destroy him with a bomb as he entered, or as he left the house. The attempts on Royalty are so infrequent in this country, and our own sovereigns go about with such freedom among their people, that a diabolical plan of this sort would be far more likely of success than one conceived against a foreign potentate. By some means, Saucy Poll had acquainted herself with the whole plan, though the conspirators used the utmost secrecy, and naturally such a hideous scheme was not even hinted at in the little meeting-room. One morning about three o'clock, before the dawn broke the darkness, Saucy Poll came to the old lady in an almost hysterical condition. The girl was so agitated and so terrified that it was a long time before she could be got to speak of the matter that troubled her. Eventually, however, she told the old lady of the plan that had been formed to throw a bomb at the Prince of Wales, and then came that trial of nerves and patience which those endure who deal with characters at enmity with all mankind.

There was not enough definite evidence of the plot to communicate to the police, and indeed Saucy Poll had only

made the confession on the absolute understanding that her confidence was not to be violated, as it meant destruction for her. All through the cold, silent hours till daybreak those two dear old people sat up, praying and thinking over the matter, and at length they resolved on a wonderful expedient.

The next evening, which was the evening before that on which the ruffians had planned the murder, they announced that it was the old man's birthday, and they arranged a particular feast in the little meeting-room. They wrote out a letter purporting to come from some friend in a remote locality, who gave a description of an attempt that had been made on the life of the Queen, and they relied on the sentiment and romance which they might be able to awaken, to rouse the men and women to such a pitch of indignation and horror that the mad-brained conspirators would be driven to abandon their awful project. They spared nothing to make the feast acceptable to the guests. Warmth, and plenty of food were provided. The old gentleman's health had been drunk, and then out came the letter. My old lady told me that she sat there outwardly smiling, while every nerve in her body was strung to breaking-point, and her heart beat so hard that she was sure everyone in the room must hear its thumps. While her eyes sought the faces of the company, and her ears drank in the words which her husband was reading, her silent lips were praying that God might speed their purpose and give success to their plans. As the old gentleman read the story of contemplated crime, painting with dramatic emphasis the whole hideous outline, the feeling among the guests grew stronger and stronger. Hisses and curses burst from them, and at last when he reached the point where the two men stood in the shadow of the house ready to cast the destroying instrument, the company leaped to their feet with



torrents of abuse and rage. The plan had been successful. Both conspirators were present; one with white face and cursing lips, but none of the company save Poll and the two old people had the remotest idea of their terror and confusion. To cover their discomfiture and avoid suspicion they also joined in the hissing and cursing of the supposed anarchists.

“If we could ketch ’em,” said one of the men, speaking for the rest, “we’d roast ’em by degrees, and give ’em time to see how it felt to be burnt up.”

All sorts of horrible tortures were devised for the murderers. After a while the storm grew quieter, and the old gentleman was able to read them a little homely lesson on the absolute futility of murdering a king in order to bring about reforms. Criminal and vile as these people were, yet something in their distorted and ugly natures had responded to sympathy and reason.

Many a time since then I have wondered how many devoted lives, such as these I have told of, are responsible for the peace that prevails in this seething and awful city. Sometimes I think that if the rich and noble at their banquets and feasts could only be translated to some of the hideous slums of London, a terrible fear would overtake them, for surely the thought would come to them that such places must be the breeding-places of anarchy and crime and bloodshed. Winter after winter, when the thousands of unemployed parade the streets, and day by day little children and feeble old people die of hunger and cold—and these things really happen: it is not fancy talk—those who have probed beneath the surface, who have lived and starved with just such creatures as these, wonder in their hearts how long the endurance will last, and what awful outcome will some day be the result of the fearful economic condition prevailing in the great towns of Britain.



## CHAPTER VIII

### GILDING THE GUTTER—MY EXPERIENCES OF COSTER LIFE

HAVING become acquainted with some aspects of life among the poor, I resolved on making a trial of life among the costers.

To the uninitiated, it may come as a surprise to hear that among the poor and labouring classes of our great cities there are as many differences in mode and manners, as many nice distinctions of class, as there are among the higher grades of society. A coster girl would not associate on equal terms with a street pedlar any more than the squire's wife with the village postmistress. Between the factory girl and domestic servant there is as much mutual contempt as between a belle of New York and a Chicago heiress.

It took weeks of working and planning before I could translate myself into a *bonâ-fide* coster girl.

Fortunately, my familiarity with the many Girls' Clubs in the poor districts of London gave me an insight into the minds and lives of the coster girls, and I was able to profess some knowledge of the life before I entered the ranks as a worker.

It is in no wise easy to "slip" into a new life. Among the "people," as we term the labouring and poor classes, an outsider is very quickly recognised. I found, however, that my foreign appearance really helped me, for as I dealt mostly with women and girls, they made their own stories about me.

By maintaining a discreet silence, I managed to get through. Being small and young-looking too, helped me. I get tired very quickly and show it, and poor Mr. C., who was nearly always with me, got the rough side of several "gentle" tongues for ill-treating me. It helped me wonderfully to have a man so big and burly, and such a splendid Cockney actor, to assume command of me. Together we were able to do what one alone could never have accomplished.

I wished to get right in among the costers and be one with them. There were several aspects of the life I desired to see, and we set out to learn the best localities for our purpose. I dared not go to any neighbourhood where I was known. The members of the Girls' Club, by whom I was called the "Little Princess," would have thought it the most splendid joke ever conceived to see me impersonate a coster girl, and I would have been mobbed by a good-humoured but embarrassing crowd. It is one of the extraordinary sights of a crowded slum to see a great rabble collect as if by magic. I did not care to risk this action, so Mr. C. enlisted the aid of a woman in Covent Garden, who introduced us to a likely and safe spot where we could sell things.

It was a wet day when we started, and the potted plants and ferns we had bought were dreadfully damp and uncomfortable to hold. Mr. C. went off to lean against a wall and smoke, and I stood with two pots in my hand. It was so cold and miserable that I almost determined to give up for that day, when I heard a loud but cheery voice say:

"Now then, missus, 'igher up; you're right on my pitch."

The owner of the voice was a big, strong, red-faced girl, who was pushing, unassisted, a hand-barrow heavily laden with potatoes and cabbages.

I moved up the street a little way, and the girl wiped her

face on her coarse white apron and gave me a good-humoured nod.

"Lor lumme, that ain't 'arf 'eavy," she said, in answer to my inquiry as to whether it was a bad load. She swiftly set herself to dressing her stall by the kerb, and when finished she turned to me with "'Ow's the gime—'ad any luck, missus?"

"None," I answered.

"Ah! wet days same as this is rough luck on the likes of us. I wouldn't 'ave come out at all to-day only my old man is down with lumbager or something, and the doctors said it might settle 'im to come out."

I drew near and ventured to sympathise.

"It won't be much good trying to-day, but I wants to get enough for the roast and boiled to-morrow. I do think one ought to keep Sundays somehow Christian-like."

She was very friendly, and inquired where I came from.

I pointed over my shoulder to Mr. C. and said: "'E brought me. I'm a stranger to these parts."

"Is yer foreign?" she asked.

"Not by half," I said. "One can't help one's birth, but one can help one's heart."

This sentiment pleased her extremely. Presently she asked me to mind her stall a minute, while she went and had a drink.

While she was gone I sold two cabbages, and she was so gratified at my smartness when she returned, that I ventured to ask her to let me help her.

"Does he knock yer about?" she inquired, referring to Mr. C.

"Not much; but it would be a long way better for me to be earning a few coppers."

"Well, if yer ain't particular about leaving him for a bit,

I'll let yer 'elp me while my old man's ill, and find yer a bed with the girl, a cousin of Bill's, who lives near by."

I ran across and told Mr. C. the joyful news of my apprenticeship, and he said he would look out for a room in the same street, so as to be able to reach me at any moment, if necessary.

So began my first real taste of life as a coster girl.

Mrs. Bolter was my friend's name, but she was known as Bess. She took me home with her that night, and I helped her to get a "bite."

"You're a 'andy sort of gal," she said, when I joined her by the fire, after washing up the plates we had used at our meal.

The room she lived in was of a fair size, and had a big window, which, however, was shut. They lived, cooked, and ate their meals and slept all in this one room; fortunately Bess had no children. The husband was, I could see, far gone in consumption. I nearly gave myself away by advocating more air. The one thing the poor will not tolerate in their dwelling-rooms is fresh air. Poor Bill was a nice sort of fellow, and the two were devoted to each other.

"Your bloke ain't much class?" he asked me sympathetically.

Bess had evidently told him of Mr. C. I nearly laughed, but managed to nod my head disconsolately.

"Never mind," said Bill; "you'll be all right along of Bess."

About eleven that night Sal came in, and I was introduced to the girl with whom I was to make my home for some time. Sal was a merry girl, with an enormous fringe and nice eyes. She had a huge mouth, and laughed most of the time. I began nodding, and Bess packed us off with an injunction to be spry in the morning.

Sal grabbed my arm and dragged me down the steep stairs into the street. I saw Mr. C. hanging about, and felt quite happy.

Sal's room was up a narrow neighbouring alley, in a house let out to thirty-seven lodgers. Entering, the air felt thick and stuffy, and I was glad to find Sal's room was a tiny attic right at the top. She paid half-a-crown a week for it.

The bed was unmade, the window shut, of course, and ashes filled the grate. From one corner Sal pulled out an iron chair-bed; it did not look inviting, but fortunately, I found it clean, so I forgave the hardness. I was awake practically all that night, and had the fire lighted before Sal woke.

I took care to shut the window, which I had opened while she slept. At four o'clock I woke my companion. She sprang up and scrambled into her clothes without troubling to wash, though there was a basin and a jug of water in the little stand in the room. We breakfasted by the firelight on bread and coffee without milk. I always kept some meat lozenges and Plasmon biscuits in my pocket, and so managed to escape with very small quantities of the food taken by the people with whom I lived.

I have never met a coster girl or a factory girl who could cook decently: their life does not foster housewifely instincts.

Sal and I were at Covent Garden Market by five in the morning. There we encountered Bess. We bought the necessary stock of fresh vegetables to add to those we already had—Bess had deposited her unsold stock under her bed the night before. Bess and I then started back to our pitch. Sal, who was a flower-girl, went off elsewhere on her own business. Bess gave me a shilling a day for helping her. For this sum I helped to push her barrow and took her place at the stall



when she ran in to look after Bill. I cooked the supper and washed the plates, and seeing how ill Bill was, I tried to do a little amateur nursing, and showed Bess how to make one or two simple things for him. Once having made a halfpenny worth of sage into a pudding, with a tiny stick of cinnamon in it, I prepared to offer it to Bill, Bess laughed and said: "Lor, what's the gal after? Why, bless me 'art, Bill won't swallow that mess." But Bill did, and asked for more.

It was a hard life enough, up at four each morning, to bed never before eleven, the long walks to the market, and the standing by that blessed barrow in rain and shine. Sometimes we took as much as eight and ten shillings in a day, at other times not more than four or five. But I wished now to find a new field for investigation, so one day, by a preconcerted plan, Mr. C. arrived and made a sort of row and ordered me to come off. I was sorry to leave Bess, but I was getting worn out. After about a month, Mr. C. and I went to look up a woman we had made friends with at Covent Garden. She was also a coster woman, but lived in quite another district. She was out when we went, but we found her at the nearest "pub," and getting into friendly conversation there, Mr. C. told her "the missus 'ad a aunt who was kind of heiress in her way, poor dear, but had gone and died and left her niece £5." With this he suggested that I should set up costering in "'slap-up style,' so that a poor, 'ard-working man could get a bit of peace and rest." The woman quite sympathised with this laudable desire, and gave us advice very readily.

It was arranged that I should meet her on the following Monday, which is the slackest day in the week for costers. The woman promised to take me to a place where I could hire a barrow of my own. On the following Monday morning she was waiting for me in her own house as she had promised. Her

home was part of a small house in a narrow court off the Fulham Road. In front of the house, as in front of most of the others, were baskets, stalls, boards, and barrows. The majority of people occupying the houses were of the costermonger class.

"This is the gal I was telling yer about, 'Enery."

This was my introduction to my coster friend's husband. He, a thick-set, short-haired man, was sitting in his shirt-sleeves smoking by the fire.

The room in which the introduction took place was not much larger than a good-sized cupboard. It contained a bed, a deal table, a sack that served as a hearth-rug, and another as a door-mat. Some crockery and pots and pans were also visible, but what was most in evidence in the room was the mingled odour of smoke and vegetables. In one corner were piled sacks of potatoes; in another, half-a-dozen baskets of green stuff. Under the table, under the chairs, even under the bed, I noticed baskets containing fruit and vegetables. My friend's bed and living-room was also her store-room. This unfortunately is the case with most of the lower class of costermongers. Sometimes, as I found out later, the stock was even kept in the dirty, ill-ventilated stables, in company with their donkeys.

"'Enery, I'm going to take my pal over to Mrs. Rummings to get her a room."

"All right, Liz! 'Op it, and look slippy about getting back."

She turned to me with "Come on, Emm!" I had told her my Christian name was Emma.

The house we went to was situated in the same street as the one in which our new friend lived. It was a two-storied house with a basement below the pavement. Many of its windows were broken, as also were the railings in front of the

house. The street door was open, and sitting on the doorstep were three or four poor little children without boots or stockings, and bare-headed. In one of the ground-floor windows was a card informing passers-by that a "room was to let." Pushing past the children, my companion gave a resounding knock at the door. This summons brought a very vicious-looking, dirty, untidy woman about forty years of age up from the underground regions.

"Well, Liz, what's up?" she asked.

"My pal here wants a room; you got one to let, 'aven't yer?"

"Yes; come up and look at it"—this after a very searching look at me.

I followed her through the passage and up the stairs, past several more groups of little children. The house was swarming with them.

The woman opened the door of a tiny, stuffy back room, containing a small iron bedstead, on which was a dirty, unmade bed, a small washstand, a common chest of drawers, and a chair. Fastened on the wall were two gaudy cards about twelve inches square. One asked, in crudely-coloured letters, the pertinent question of "What is home without a mother?" and the other bore the legend "Home, sweet Home."

"I ain't 'ad time to tidy up this morning," Mrs. Rummings said. "I put up my brother Ben 'ere last night."

"What! is 'e out?" asked Liz.

"Yus; come out a day afore yesterday."

"Lor! don't time fly. I thought he got two stretch."

"So he did," said Mrs. Rummings; "but they knocked six months orf 'cos of 'is good behaviour."

By this conversation I understood that the bedroom offered to me had lately been occupied by a recently discharged

criminal. However, I had made up my mind to go through with the adventure, so I asked what rent was required.

“‘Arf-a-crown a week, and down on the knuckle.”

This I interpreted to be a request for payment in advance. I paid at once.

“When do you want to come in?” said Mrs. Rummings.

“To-morrow, if possible,” I said.

I also asked her to have the windows opened, to scrub the floor, and as a special favour not to allow the bed to be occupied that night.

All this my landlady, as I must now call Mrs. Rummings, promised to do.

And now followed a sad experience. After I had paid my half-crown, Liz said :

“Let’s all go and have a gargle on the strength of the deal, eh?”

“Don’t mind if we do,” said my landlady.

“Come along, Emm,” Liz called to me, and we left the house, went through the court out into the main road, and straight into the common bar of a public-house. It was midday. The bar was full of women, some quite young, others grey-haired, but the majority middle-aged.

All were drinking and loudly talking. The two or three men present were of the usual public-house loafer type. I found afterwards that this Monday drinking is quite a custom with women of the lower working class. In some parts of London, more drunken women can be seen on a Monday afternoon than at any other time during the week. A visit to the police courts on a Tuesday morning will illustrate to what a shocking extent this Monday tippling has developed.

As I stood in this particular bar and overheard the conversations of the poor, wretched women gathered there, I grew convinced that the framers of our laws could do no better

than immediately make a law forbidding all women to be served with drink in public-houses.

Leaving the bar, Liz suggested that we should go to a barrow-yard in the neighbourhood and hire a barrow. I was taken to a yard where there were a number of barrows of all descriptions. The owner, a fat, middle-aged woman, wearing a coarse apron in which was a pocket containing money, which she clinked with her hands as she talked to me, agreed to let me have a barrow for a shilling a week.

This woman was also a money-lender to costermongers, lending them money to buy stock. She charged them as much as twopence for the loan of every shilling borrowed, the time of the loan lasting generally from Friday to Monday. But the money is sometimes repaid in a few hours.

If bad luck should follow the transaction, the debt is an awful and growing burden to the borrower. The establishment of State banks, which would lend the respectable poor money at reasonable interest to start them in their small business, is much to be advocated. The system has been tried in Germany with good results.

The next day I moved into the room I had engaged, with a few belongings, and Mr. C. got a lodging a few doors further down.

That night I slept but little: the streets below echoed and re-echoed with passing feet, coarse laughter, and drunken songs. In the middle of the night dreadful shrieks arose from the next house, where a woman was being beaten, and although she screamed "Murder!" and her cries filled the neighbourhood, no one seemed to interfere. At last the place grew quiet, and I fell asleep, seemingly only for a few minutes. A loud knock at my door woke me, and on opening it I found Liz waiting for me to go to market with her. We started off with my empty barrow.



This was the hardest work I think I have ever done. My arms ached, and my legs almost refused to move; but my sturdy comrade made no trouble whatever about it.

On arriving at the market we left our barrows in charge of a woman to whom we gave twopence each for minding them. These women are quite necessary to prevent petty peculations that would occur if the carts and barrows were not watched. We made up our minds to buy several boxes of tomatoes. By a system of mental arithmetic, my guide computed that the tomatoes which these boxes contained, and for which we paid two shillings per box, would, if retailed at twopence per pound, bring us in a profit of one shilling a box. We bought twenty boxes.

We also bought four bushels of plums at four shillings a bushel. These, if sold at twopence a pound, would bring us in a gross profit of four shillings per bushel. We had to pay the porter who carried our purchases to our barrows a penny per bushel, and sixpence for the twenty tomato-boxes. I was unfortunate in loading my barrow, for when I tried to move it, I found the weight was so ill-planned that I could not push it. My friend showed her trained skill and experience at this point. She swiftly packed her own barrow, so that the weight was adjusted to a nicety, and then rearranged my load. Notwithstanding this, I found it quite impossible to push the loaded barrow from Covent Garden to our pitch, and was obliged to engage a man to help me.

On arriving at our chosen street I found the "pitches," or places that barrows occupy, are in many cases looked upon as freeholds. Only in rare instances is it necessary for the costermonger to worry about his regular place in the street where he always sells. A stranger arriving earlier and taking up what the regular costermonger considers his own particular position would be very roughly handled indeed—that is, of

course, if the usurper happened to be a weaker man or had fewer friends than the rightful owner. The police often assist the regular costermonger to hold his position against interlopers.

So much is this ownership of position respected, that it is no unusual thing to hear of quite respectable sums of money being paid for the goodwill of a pitch. I was told that as much as £80 was paid for a particularly popular haddock stall in Battersea. Of course, the position in the market quite governs the value of the stall, and one may take up a stand in the quiet parts of the street unmolested.

The nominal owners of the best places in such busy markets as the New Cut or Lambeth Walk are quite well-to-do people. I have known as much as £15 to be taken on a Saturday evening at one of these stalls.

There is also another type of costermonger who is comparatively wealthy. He is the man who owns vans and horses and numbers of barrows in several market streets. These barrows he stocks and lets out on commission to the poorer class of costermongers.

I got to know the wife of one of these men. Her baby was ill, and she came in to see if Mrs. Rummings could send her a girl to help her for a bit.

I offered to go, as I thought it possible I might help the woman, who seemed much distressed about her child. I was in and out of that home a good deal. The child died, and they spent £20 on the funeral. I never saw lovelier flowers than those that were laid on that tiny coffin. But the baby needn't have gone to Heaven so early, if its mother had not fed it on potted salmon and salt bacon, and given it sips of gin to stop the pains. The bereaved mother paid £7 for a black dress—and she could afford the luxury—her husband

got as much as fifteen shillings a day for the rent of a pitch in a very paying locality.

The man had no more legal right to that money than I have, but it came to him as an acknowledged right.

He had a cart and horse, and hired out barrows to costers. Early in the morning his cart, laden with fruit and vegetables, was driven round to the stalls he had contracted for. These were dressed and made over ready to the hirer. At night the stuff was all removed by the same man, so the hirer had no responsibility for loss, except by bad sales.

Mr. Miff, this wealthy coster's wife, got very friendly with me, and one day offered me the loan of £5 to set up with a donkey of my own, and then huskily added that it was for the kid's sake. I was much touched by this kindness, and have only to add my adventures with the donkey to finish my autobiography as coster girl.

To be the proud possessor of a donkey seems to be the object in life of every costermonger. They practically monopolise the ownership of these patient, hard-working little beasts.

As a rule, a coster's donkey is his friend, and it is only very rarely that they are ill-treated.

London costermongers have formed a donkey market for themselves. It is held every Friday at Islington, "on the stones," as they say.

About midday the market presents a very lively appearance. To the novice the bustle seems all confusion. Burly, shirt-sleeved men run the donkeys up and down, shouting, bandying chaff, and descanting on the merits of the animals they wish to sell. Some of the criticisms made by the experts on the animals is amusing.

"What's the matter with his eye?"

"Nothink."

"No, it ain't shut up. 'E's a-winking—that's all."

Or it may be the donkey's staying power is impeached.

"Don't look strong, don't 'e?"

"What yer want for thirty bob, a push hard (Panhard) motor car?"

Then, again, one may hear negotiations of this sort :

"Yus'm ; he's all right. I'll give yer ten nickers for him."

"No ; fifteen pun ten is his price."

"Ten jimmy o'goblins—I'll give not a deaner more."

The buyer holds out his hand with ten shining sovereigns in it. This is no unusual price for a sturdy Spanish donkey, known as "fancy," a type much coveted by the well-to-do costermongers.

The average price paid for a "moke" is something between £3 or £4, though some may be bought as low as a "dollar a leg"—that is, £1 a piece.

All bargains are concluded with a sort of hand-shake.

"You shall 'ave 'im for two pun ten."

"Ere ; smack my old 'and—£2 buys 'im."

The owner holds his hand out, the purchaser smacks it, and the bargain is complete.

Mr. C. and I bought a donkey for £3. We had already hired a coster cart and some scraps of harness at the yard where I hired my barrow. It was extremely funny to see Mr. C. trying to lead the donkey off amid a good-natured fire of chaff from brother costers.

I longed to ride the beast, but Mr. C. assured me that such a proceeding would give the show away ; so we toiled off to the stable we had hired for two shillings a week.

Our neighbours were very much interested in our purchase and our consequent rise in the world, but we were not allowed undue pride in our bargain. One man pointed out that the moke had weak legs, another that his mouth was

not symmetrical enough, and a girl politely told me that his tail was a lot longer than my tongue, which might have been taken for a compliment.

Mr. C. pointed out that these were the donkey's misfortunes and not his faults, and that they would mellow by keeping.

The days we spent with our moke and barrow were happy, though the life was fearfully hard. Our stock-in-trade cost us £4 10s. We had cabbages, tomatoes, oranges, and bananas, and on that sum we made a profit of £1 18s.; but our working hours were practically eighteen hours a day. We took turns at the barrow, and slipped away for a good bath and sleep between times.

One day, when standing at my stall, a costermonger came to me and asked me to take a ticket for a "lead" that was being got up for poor old "Boss 'Ooker." I showed my ignorance by asking some amateur questions as to this extraordinary invitation. The man luckily thought I was chaffing him. He grinned at me for a moment and held out a small, black-edged card, saying:

"Cop, old missus; I ain't got no time for kidding." He pressed into my hand this curious advertisement:

"MANY CAN HELP ONE, WHERE ONE CANNOT HELP MANY

#### "A Harmonic Meeting

will be held next Monday night at the Goat and Boots Hotel, by the kind permission of the landlord, Mr. James Downey, Esq., for the purpose of assisting our old friend Alfred Hooke, better known as 'Old 'Ooker,' having met with the misfortune of losing his wife. The following gentlemen have promised their support, and the chair will be taken during the evening, amongst others, by Charles Neat, better known as Nipper Neat, Punch Dowsett, Flash Harry, and also good old Jibber will act as vice. Rally round one who has always



been the first to drop to others. Harmony commences 8.30 sharp. Ladies invited."

This was an occasion not to be missed, and Mr. C. and I presented ourselves at this gathering, which is usually called "a friendly lead."

These benefits are arranged to alleviate all sorts of misfortunes. The room we entered was a long one in which were arranged a number of tables, with Windsor chairs down both sides. At one end a smaller table was placed, and near the door was a small stand on which lay two plates, one over the other, also a wooden hammer. There was a hammer of the same kind on the table at the end of the room. These hammers were used by the Chairmen and Mr. Vice, to call the friendly leaders to order.

The business part of the meeting consisted in each guest delicately placing an offering of silver between the two plates. Sometimes as much as £6 or £8 is collected at these meetings. The gaiety consisted of singing and drinking beer.

It was very amusing to see the ceremony with which the proceedings were conducted. The Chairman, a red-faced coster of about fifty, took off his coat at the beginning to allow himself larger room. As each item on the programme became due, he rose in his authority, struck two smart taps on the table with his hammer, and turning towards the "Vice," a melancholy, cadaverous-looking man, would say in a husky voice: "I believe the next worthy call lies in your 'ands, brother Vice."

The exact direction of the call would be indicated by "brother Vice"; then after a few loud knockings of the hammer and various personal compliments and encouragements, the man indicated would rise and sing.

We left the entertainment before the men and women got drunk, pleading as our excuse that we had to find a new room a long way off. That night we slipped quietly back into civilisation.

It was a real pang parting with "the moke"; he was such a good-natured beast. We sold him for "thirty bob" to the nicest coster we knew. The money was never paid, for we left before the man could collect the money. We always hope our donkey found a grateful friend.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE STORY OF THE SHOP

FROM this open-air trading it was a strange transition into the ranks of the shop-girls.

I have often wondered what the attraction in the life of a tea-shop waitress or shop-girl can be, for so many of the girls I know in domestic service and in working-class homes desire to become waitresses or "young ladies" in shops. Perhaps the life is supposed to be more dignified than a barmaid's business, and more exciting than domestic service.

But few of the girls seem to take into consideration the long hours, the shabby pay, and the many disadvantages of the work. Maybe the life is rather brighter than ordinary service, but it certainly is a very fatiguing one. There are also many regulations to be observed, and the pay, as I found, is nowhere extravagant. About ten shillings a week is the average, and some firms oblige the girls to spend part of this on their dinners, which have to be purchased from the counters.

The work generally commences about eight o'clock. Floors have to be scrubbed, tables and crockery cleaned, counters daintily arranged, then the girls are allowed a few minutes to make themselves neat and tidy. Until 7 p.m., with the exception of a few minutes for meals, there is a constant running to and fro attending to the wants of the

customers. The duties are not hard to learn, but some girls prove more attractive to customers than others. It is the aim of these girls to entice the same customers to their tables each day. Some of them have quite a large following, which by no means detracts from their value in the eyes of the managers of most small tea-shops. It is amusing to observe how a regular customer, known to be mean, is neglected; but one who scatters largesse with a liberal hand is almost fought for.

In many of the establishments "no gratuities" is the rule, but the rule is very often broken.

The girls frequently receive presents from the male customers who admire them; flowers, theatre and concert tickets are given, and many accept these favours. But as a rule, these young women are loyal to sweethearts of their own class; and it would make many a junior clerk writhe if he could hear the recipient of his gifts "take him off"—that is, describe his physical peculiarities or affected manner of speech—to her sweetheart.

Perhaps there is no harder-working person in London than a coffee-shop waitress. I spent some time in this capacity. My hours were fourteen daily, and my wages eight shillings a week and my food. This food is ample, if coarse, and the same epithet would describe my employer. He was the largest man I think I have ever seen, and an excellent advertisement of the possibilities of his eating-house.

I commenced work at 6.30 a.m. After clearing the shop, I had to help in the kitchen. I had also to serve the occasional customers who came in before eight o'clock. Within five minutes of that hour the shop was filled with customers, all simultaneously calling out their needs, and exhibiting the greatest impatience imaginable.

"Now then, miss, 'arf of thick, three doorsteps, and a two-eyed steak."



MISS MALVERY SERVING IN A CHEAP, COFFEE HOUSE.





SERVING CHILDREN IN A "SWEET" SHOP.

“Rasher an’ two, three, and a pint.”

“Large tea, two slices, and a neg, my dear.”

These, and dozens of other equally strange and unintelligible requests, were shouted at me. I repeated these orders as far as my memory would allow me through a small window opening into the kitchen. There they were thoroughly understood.

I quickly learned that “thick” meant coffee, “doorsteps” slices of bread, “two-eyed steaks” the pungent but much-favoured bloater, “rasher and two” eggs and bacon.

After a few mornings they ceased to puzzle me, and I had learned enough of this strange language to compile a slang dictionary.

This rush of business in the morning lasted from eight o’clock until half-past. After this the shop would be empty, and but one or two customers remain. We, that is the coffee-housekeeper, his wife, and myself, had breakfast, whilst a young girl who helped in the kitchen attended to the shop. After the meal, which was taken in the shop, washing-up commenced. This finished, more shop-cleaning, potato-peeling, and general help in preparation for the dinner occupied me. Then, after a few minutes devoted to a hasty toilet, I returned to the shop again. More or less white tablecloths were spread for the midday meal, and the menu for the day was chalked on a large piece of slate hung at the door.

Almost before the clock had finished striking twelve, the first dinner customers rushed in. The noise and bustle of the morning was repeated, the only difference being in the orders.

After dinner followed the washing-up of platters and kitchen utensils. Then we had our own dinner, served in the shop.

During the afternoon very few customers entered. I

expected another rush in the afternoon at tea-time, but this did not occur; our breakfast and dinner customers evidently went home to tea. At seven o'clock the shop was closed, and on Sundays I was allowed to leave at two o'clock.

The hot air of the gas-lit shop, the constant smell of cooking, and the strain of serving impatient customers, combined with the lack of outdoor exercise, made me at last quite ill, and I now understand the reason why all advertisements requiring girls for coffee-shop work demand that the applicants shall be strong and healthy.

One advantage of these places is, however, that the customers are, according to their standard, very respectful to the girls waiting on them. There is none of the coarse talk and dangerous familiarity which is characteristic of the "public-house." From the amount of custom that comes to these places, I am sure they would vie successfully with the public-houses, if run upon more attractive lines, with a public hall where the men could smoke and read.

My next venture at leading the life of a "working girl" was to become a "shop-girl." It required a considerable amount of influence on the part of my friends for me to obtain permission to spend a short time in the establishment of a general draper's, who gave employment to a number of assistants of both sexes.

One August morning I found myself, portmanteau in hand, following a rather prim, middle-aged housekeeper to a bedroom situated over the shop of one of the largest drapers in the West End of London.

As far as she knew, or anybody else concerned in the business, with the exception of one of the partners, I was a young person joining the firm for the purpose of learning the arts and mysteries of the draper's profession. I was a draper's assistant "living in."

When the housekeeper left me, I looked round the place that was to be, for some time at least, my home. It was a large room with two windows looking out on to the main road. These were fitted with Venetian blinds, but no curtains. There was a large fireplace, but it had been boarded up. The floor was bare, with the exception of strips of carpet about four feet long by eighteen inches wide, which were laid by the sides of the four bedsteads which stood in the room.

The walls were bare of all ornament ; but hanging near the door was a framed set of rules. These I read with interest : they numbered something over seventy, and the breach of any of the items seemed to be punishable with fines, which ranged in amount from one penny to half-a-crown. There were also regulations as to dress, and as to general conduct for every hour of the day and night.

Some of the rules are undoubtedly necessary, both for the welfare of the employé and the employer. But many of them struck me as frivolous, and merely vexatious.

“ House door closed at 11 p.m.; Saturdays 12.”

“ All lights out on closing of house door ; anyone leaving a light after that time in bedrooms will be discharged.” (This entails going to bed in the dark after a visit to the theatre.)

“ Assistants sleeping out without permission, for the first offence to be fined half-a-crown, for the second offence to be fined five shillings, and for the third offence to be discharged.”

“ All bedrooms to be cleared at 8 a.m., a fine of threepence for every five minutes late at breakfast.”

Eating sweets in shop was punished, and two and sixpence was the fine inflicted on the unfortunate assistant who did not inform the shop-walker that a customer was leaving without making a purchase. For putting flowers in a glass in a bedroom, or for fixing photographs or pictures to the walls of the same room, a fine of sixpence.



As I stood in the room the door opened, and three "young ladies" burst in. Two of them scarcely noticed me, but rushed at once to their looking-glasses and made a hasty toilet. The third one, a pleasant-looking girl, came to me and said:

"Have you just joined the firm?"

"Yes," I answered.

"Oh, I am so glad! I am in charge of this room, and I hope we shall be friends."

"I am sure we shall," I said.

"This will be your bed," she continued, pointing out a single one.

I was shown also the particular chest of drawers and toilet-table that were to be for my own use.

"Take off your things, my dear, and come down to dinner. Put everything away; leave nothing about, or you will lose them or be fined."

I did as she bade me, and followed her down the stairs and along a gloomy passage into the basement of the building. We were joined by a growing crowd of other young people, all hurrying to the dining-room. No one seemed to have a minute to spare.

This want of proper time to take one's meals is a serious grievance. Owing to the distance of the dining-room from the business parts of the firm, in some cases as much as five minutes was occupied out of the five-and-twenty that were allowed for each meal. Then there was more waiting at the table, therefore the food had to be "bolted." The dining-room was a long, bare room, with plain white walls, devoid of all decoration.

The cooking was shocking. The meat was almost raw, the potatoes stodgy, the cabbage watery, and pudding cold. The food was sufficient in quantity—that is, for myself, although perhaps for a growing, healthy country boy or girl



there would not be enough, for I have heard many complaints of the insufficiency of food. In many cases it is eked out by purchases from the house stewards.

At one end of the dining-room in which I sat was a table temptingly laid out with fruit, pastries, etc. : these were for sale, the steward being granted the privilege of selling them. At breakfast-time, fried bacon, eggs, sausages, and other relishes were displayed. These were also very often bought by the assistants. The firm only provided plain bread and butter for this meal, as also for tea and supper. This I consider to be unfair. There should be sufficient food provided by the firm, and their employés should not be tempted to spend their meagre wages on food, when its supply is part of the contract made with their employers.

The chief grievance of the shop assistants may be described as a *standing* one. The Shop Hours Regulation Act sets out that no young person—that is, anyone under eighteen years of age—shall be employed in or about a shop for more than seventy-four hours in any one week. Most firms work their young people up to this limit. Now, this means very many hours spent upon the feet, sometimes as many as ten in one day. “Oh,” someone will say, “there is in existence a Shop Seats Act, a law that orders every shop-keeper to place for his assistants seats in accessible places, so that they may sit down when not actually engaged in business.” Yes; the seats are provided, but the assistants are afraid to use them. Something like this happens if they do :

The shop-walker sees a girl sitting down. He approaches her and asks : “Are you tired, miss ?”

If he sees her sitting again, he will ask her if she is indisposed. The third time he catches her seated during business hours he will tell her that she is ill, and must go to her room. This means that she will be discharged.

Of course this does not happen in all firms, but this disapproval of the girls resting during business hours is an unfortunate fact.

Most firms like their assistants to look busy, even if they are not serving customers, and often hours are spent in uselessly arranging and rearranging the stock. One has actually to suffer the hardships of counter-serving to be able to understand thoroughly the courage that many a poor shop-girl exhibits. Suffering pain, and weary almost to the point of sinking, she will smile and endeavour to humour an exacting, fault-finding customer—invariably one of our own sex—who seems to delight in giving all the trouble imaginable.

Legislation may provide seats, reformers may cry out against the abuses of the "living in" system, but until the public grow more considerate and sympathetic—thus bringing about shorter hours of work for the poor counter-slaves of our large towns—very little will be done to ameliorate the hardships of their lives.

There exists in the minds of most people a prejudice akin to disrespect for the barmaid. Even the working class have ideas on this subject. If a young working man "picks up"—as becoming engaged is called—with a girl from behind the bar, many of his family consider that he is "throwing himself away." Even his male companions outside his home treat him to a certain amount of rude chaff. The women of his family imagine a barmaid to be someone who is in some subtle manner a fascinatingly wicked person.

This is very unfair to the class. Many of the young girls who earn their living in this arduous calling are subjected to numerous temptations, yet remain good, upright, and respectable women. Often they are obliged to stand behind a counter serving semi-drunken, coarse, and foul-mouthed persons of both sexes; obliged to hear bad language, and the vile talk of that

class of man who makes it a pastime to insult young women engaged in this business.

As a girl once said to me : "The life is hard enough without having to be insulted by cads."

Indeed it is a hard life : no Roman slave lived a harder. From early morning until late at night one has a constant round of severe work. When not serving, one is cleaning. The girl is often subjected to the bad temper of a harassed mistress, or the familiarities of a drunken master. Scarcely taking any outdoor exercise—being too tired to go out during the two or three "rest-hours" which the custom of the trade allows these girls in the afternoon—the barmaid soon loses all her good looks, and is ruthlessly discharged. It is little wonder that many of these girls succumb to the temptation of drink, which is always at their elbow. It is their fond belief that it will revive their jaded spirits and restore their lost energy.

The atmosphere of a public-house must weaken, in the course of time, the most exemplary, and undermine both health and moral calibre. It is an unnatural life for any young girl to live. Youth is destroyed. And to be pretty and young are qualifications demanded of a barmaid. It has often excited my compassion to see the early age at which some of the girls I know, engaged in this pernicious business, are discharged as worn-out. I have often wondered what becomes of these young women when they grow old. One never sees an old barmaid, rarely a middle-aged one.

With some difficulty I obtained a situation as barmaid in a public-house.

My work commenced at 7.30 in the morning. At that hour I had to be in the bar to clean and dust and generally make tidy. The pewter counter and the brass taps were cleaned by the "potman." At 8.15 a.m. I went to breakfast. Much better breakfasts were provided than those given to me

at the draper's, where I had worked. Then fifteen minutes was allowed for my toilet, and at 9 a.m. I was back in the bar serving customers, who were chiefly women bringing jugs for lunch or dinner beer. At twelve working men come in, some bringing their dinners wrapped up in handkerchiefs or newspapers. Their orders, as a rule, were for "'arfs of ale," "oblige wif a knife," and "a little bit of mustard." Some would buy pennyworth's of bread and cheese to eat with their beer. It struck me that if the proprietors had sold cheap and good soup, coffee, cooked meat, and potatoes, we should have done as much business as the coffee-shop where I had served.

I am told that many publicans are catering for this kind of trade. If this is so, I am sure it is better for themselves and for their customers. The house I was in was called a "beerhouse"; spirits were not sold there at all, and it was a far better class of place than the ordinary "public."

The publican, like everyone else, begins to feel the stress of competition, and many of them are extending their attractions. Some display on their counters daintily-arranged plates of food, and everyone must notice how a number of public-houses now exhibit on their windows advertisements of food. "Sausages and mashed," sandwiches sometimes, and frequently "tea and coffee."

After the dinner-time customers had returned to their work, there came a slack time. I was allowed forty minutes for dinner. After this I went into the bar until three o'clock. There was a seat in the bar, and no objection was made if I or my companions sat down when there were no customers to serve. At three I went to "rest." I invariably spent this time walking or riding on a tram. At six tea was served, and at 6.30 I returned to the bar. Business remained quiet until about 9 p.m. Then one by one the "regulars" dropped in. These customers generally used the saloon bar. Customers



here had to pay something like 25 per cent. more for their purchases. It seemed to me the room was used as a kind of club, and I wonder why temperance reformers do not open coffee-houses on the same principle. My intimate knowledge of the working people leads me to believe that if bright, well-furnished coffee-houses were opened side by side with every public-house in cities, where men and women could "step in" for refreshment and social intercourse, there would be an incredible reform worked among the drinking classes. Unfortunately, the only people who would be inclined to start on such a crusade would be the ones who would turn the bars into pulpits.

To return to my duties. At 10 a.m. I went in to supper. At 12.30 the house was cleared, and after a few minutes spent in washing glasses, I was able to go to bed.

One of the worst sights I think I noticed was a young woman who gave a little baby, only a few months old, sips from her can. When I remonstrated with her, she told me "to mind my place," and not "interfere with my betters."

Sometimes working men, especially on Sunday mornings, would bring their little children into the bar, evidently after taking them for a walk. They often offered the little ones drink from their glasses—this, for the most part, was want of thought, for I have rarely met one of this class who did not condemn excessive drinking, and approve of their children being abstainers. The two children of the house were both Band of Hope members, and spouted temperance recitations to the great delight of their parents and friends.

Many girls like the barmaid's life. They are fond of the excitement, and the opportunity of conversation with men. To marry a gentleman is the ambition of many of these "young ladies," an ambition which, almost without exception, brings trouble in its train.



## The Soul Market

The pay of a barmaid generally ranges from five to fifteen shillings a week—not much, considering the long hours; but matrimony seems to be the stake nearly all these girls play for, and a very dangerous game it is.

The experiment that interested me as much as any I experienced while living the life of the poor and working classes was the one that gave me an insight into a trade that is really a benefaction to the poor, and that is the trade in fried fish.

During my recent travels in Poverty Kingdom my attention was very often drawn towards a class of shop, the very existence of which may be described as an assault on one's olfactory nerves, and seeing how these places were patronised, I determined to study the fried fish business from "inside" if possible.

I have many times stood outside these places, notwithstanding their atmospheric advertisement, and watched the crowd of customers streaming into them, eager, hungry-eyed work-folk, anxiously purchasing their frugal dinners and suppers.

So watching, I have grown convinced that these humble and often malodorous shops play a very important part in the social and domestic economy of London's poor. From these shops many a workman's wife is able to provide an ample meal for six or even eight mouths for as small a sum as sixpence. Another advantage to the poor housekeeper is the facility with which she can by the aid of these shops provide a hot meal without the expense or trouble of cooking. Fuel is a heavy item in small wages, therefore cheap and good cooked food is certainly an advantage to the people.

We owe the introduction into London of the fried fish business to the children of the Ghetto, and these people are even now pre-eminent in the preparation of this particular

food. The custom of selling hot fried potatoes we got from the French, and until quite recently almost every fried fish shop in London exhibited in its windows a notice that potatoes were cooked within *à la mode*. I felt sure I should be able to get into close touch with many poor people if I could get work for a time in one of those shops.

So I managed to get an introduction to a "lidy" in the trade. She was a big, good-tempered, good-natured widow, with a very flourishing business.

"I cuts two 'trunks' a day, and do a ton of taters in the week," she told me.

Not then knowing to what she referred, I concealed my ignorance by looking as wise as possible—smiling and nodding my head. I had to use all my persuasive powers to obtain from her a week's employment as an assistant.

"You'll find it 'ard work, my gal, and don't you forget it."

I told her I was not afraid of hard work.

"Well, start on Monday, and I'll give yer five shillings to commence with. You can 'ave yer grub along o' me, but you'll 'ave ter sleep out."

I thanked Heaven for this last condition, for I felt it would have been absolutely impossible for me to pass twenty-four consecutive hours in the atmosphere of the shop.

"You 'ad better be 'ere about 'arf-past four Monday mornin'!" she continued.

"Monday morning?" I hesitatingly asked—surely she must mean the afternoon, I thought. But I was soon undeceived.

"Yes, mornin', of course; we're to go to market, you know."

The life is indeed a hard one, if to carry it on it is necessary to commence work at 4.30 a.m. Nevertheless I meant to "see the thing through." Therefore, on the Monday I

presented myself in the early morning at the shop door of my future employer.

She was already dressed and waiting when I arrived. She cheerily bade me "Good morning," and told me to come in and "'ave a cup of corfee wif a drop of something in it to keep out the cold while we was waiting for the cart."

I accepted her hospitality, but took my coffee without the "something in it," which I found to be gin, of which she took quite half a cupful.

I had scarcely finished my coffee when the cart arrived. The driver of this vehicle proved to be a sleepy, surly youth, who scarcely spoke a word the whole of this or any other morning that he took us to market.

At first the empty streets looked desolate and forsaken, but as we went on the traffic increased so much, that notwithstanding the early hour of the morning, there was quite a stream of carts and vans passing from the south to the north of the river by way of London Bridge. Turning down Fish Street Hill, our horse's head was seized by a rough-looking man.

"It's all right, my dear; 'e's the cart-minder," said my employer. This man looks after the arrangement of carts and vans, and he drew us into our place alongside the kerb.

There are numbers of these men, and sometimes women, who attend regularly every day and take up positions near the market, looking after probably forty or fifty vans and carts during the morning, the owners of these vehicles paying them one or two pence for their trouble. I alighted from my not too comfortable conveyance, and at her request, followed my employer, Mrs. M., as best I could along the crowded pavement of Thames Street. She threaded her way quite unconcernedly, though to me the place was a chaotic pandemonium.

Hundreds of rough, coarse-looking men, wearing dirty

white smocks, with trousers drawn up and tied in a peculiar fashion under their knees, passed along, carrying on their heads enormous curiously-shaped and padded hats, on which they balanced huge boxes and baskets of fish ; rushing and pushing along the street, getting out of no one's way, and almost knocking me down every few yards I walked. These men progressed, shouting at the top of their voices as they passed, the names of the people to whom their loads were to be delivered. These were the market porters, and what with the owners of the hundreds of carts and barrows that were standing about, the crowds of retail fishmongers, hawkers, and male and female loafers, the whole place teemed with movement and noisy life.

It was with the greatest difficulty imaginable that I followed Mrs. M. Fortunately, she was a tall woman, and wore red flowers in her bonnet ; otherwise I am afraid I should have missed her. She waited for me in front of the market.

"Keep close to me," she said, "and I'll put you up to the buying."

Billingsgate presented a busy scene indeed ! On every side was heaped, in seeming confusion, boxes and baskets, or piles of glistening fish ; more porters carrying their loads, men shouting prices of fish, others selling by way of auction—the whole scene presenting a wonderful picture of work and energy.

There are two ways in which fish is brought to Billingsgate. It may be water-borne or land-borne. If conveyed by water, it is brought by steam carriers, who collect the fish from the North Sea trawlers and deliver it at the market packed in ice, in large boxes called "trunks," weighing about 90 lbs. each. These are sold by the companies who own the trawlers and carriers by auction. Their principal customers are the class known as "bummarees." These



are practically middle-men, and form the majority of the two hundred or so tenants who rent the market-stalls.

The reason for the bummaree may be shortly explained thus: The trunks contain unassorted fish—the retailer cannot afford to buy whole trunks at one time, for he may only require plaice, soles, or some special kinds of fish. The auctioneers and commission salesmen having no time to sort the fish into lots, the bummaree buys it, separates it, and sells to the retailer exactly what he wants.

It was from one of these men that Mrs. M. bought her fish. She paid her money, pointed out her purchases to a porter, told him her name and the name of the “standing”—that is, the place where her cart was.

We now once more pushed our way through the crowd and found the cart. The fish that had been bought was already in it, so we paid the “minder,” clambered up into the vehicle, the horse started, and within half an hour we were back at the shop. After a substantial breakfast, taken with Mrs. M. in her tiny shop-parlour, work commenced. With the assistance of the surly driver, the fish purchased at the market was sorted, cleaned, and cut up into small pieces. Then several baskets of potatoes were scrubbed and washed. After this they were put in a machine which cut them up into small slices. Then followed a general clean up of the premises. This completed, fires had to be lit in the furnaces, over which the frying-pans were soon to be set. The fish was fried in a specially prepared oil. Each piece of fish, before frying, was dipped in batter.

It was now nearly twelve o'clock, and the dinner customers began to come in. Working men entered and asked for “Two and one.” They were immediately served by Mrs. M. with two pennyworth of fish—that is, four small pieces—



and one pennyworth of fried potatoes, the whole making quite a good meal.

"Eat 'ere or take away?" she invariably asked each customer.

If they answered "'Ere," the fish and potatoes were put on a small plate, then deluged with vinegar from a bottle with a hole in the cork. The customers were also supplied with a knife and fork, upon the handles of which were graven "Stolen from Mrs. M." If the customers answered "Tike away," the food was simply wrapped in a large piece of newspaper and handed over to them.

Many of the customers were little children who came straight from school. Their purchases generally consisted of a halfpennyworth of fish and a halfpennyworth of potatoes. Sometimes, one more hungry-looking and more raggedly-dressed than the others would come in and ask for "A 'aporth of cracklings." Mrs. M. would give these poor children two large handfuls of tiny pieces of fish, broken potatoes, and the chips of fried batter which remained in the wire baskets after the cooked fish had been removed from them.

After the midday customers were served, the shop was closed and our dinner taken, after which followed more cleaning and preparation for the supper trade. It was always close upon four o'clock when everything was ready for the evening. Now came a much-desired rest until seven, when frying commenced again, and customers began to drop in. Between the hours of eight and ten it was scarcely possible to fry fish fast enough for the buyers who crowded in and waited at the counter. After that time trade gradually fell off, until at twelve o'clock there were no more customers and the shop doors were closed.

How human beings can stand the wear and tear of such

a life is beyond my understanding. I must say that I never had a harder week in my life. I shall never pass a fried fish shop again without some feeling of sympathy and respect for those working in it, for they indeed are living the "strenuous life." Moreover, they are a thoroughly respectable and thrifty class of people.

## CHAPTER X

### IN THE SWEATING DENS OF WEST AND EAST LONDON

LIFE as a shop-girl seemed hard enough to me, but in comparison with some later experience in sweating dens it was luxurious.

It is a common error to suppose that sweating is an evil confined to the East End. Some of the most shameful sweating shops exist in the West End, and are the outcome, partly at any rate, of the wicked habit a large section of women have of not paying their dressmaking bills for months or even years. I have a friend, a girl, who is an officer's daughter, and was trained at the Slade Art School, and in some Parisian studios for her work. She first took up dressmaking, and then designing, as a profession, and for this purpose apprenticed herself to a fashionable dressmaker in Bond Street. There she worked for three years. For the first year she was paid nothing, the second year she had five shillings a week, and the third year eight shillings a week. The dressmaker she worked for was a good woman, and herself an exceedingly hard worker. She had, in the beginning of her career, a fearful struggle to make ends meet.

When, after her apprenticeship, my friend desired to open a dressmaking establishment herself, she went very fully into the details of the trade, and she found that she would require capital enough to keep her entirely for three years before she

could start with any hope of ultimate success. The necessity for this large capital being that society ladies seldom pay their dressmakers' bills before two or three years. The result is that women who have not capital are obliged to borrow money at large interest to carry on their business.

My knowledge of sweating was gained by experiences I had both in the East and the West End. How I came to enlist myself among the sweated workers of the West End was in this wise: A student friend of mine had a cousin who was the daughter of a bank clerk. The father had died without making provision for the large family he left, and the girl, with her two sisters, found themselves obliged, without being educated for it, to take up work which would help them to support the young members of their family. This girl elected to learn millinery and dressmaking, being lured by various advertisements and florid accounts she had heard of ladies starting in business, and making three or four thousand pounds a year without any capital. The girl was made the dupe of a person who was puffed in a ladies' paper. This journal gave an account of a millinery school in the West End which was owned by a society lady, who was supposed to be a genius, not only in the way of her work, but as a teacher. The girl took advantage of the kind offer of a relation who was willing to give her £50 for educational purposes, to apprentice herself to this lady, who had a large and seemingly flourishing business. Poor child! how was she to know that the account in the ladies' paper was probably paid for, and was a thinly-veiled advertisement? People who know nothing of women's journalism cannot be supposed to understand the little intricacies of the trade. How was she to know, for instance, that many of the fashionable writers on dress, beauty culture, and such themes, get all their wardrobes, toilet requisites, and any

other articles which they may mention in the society chat, free? How was she to know that the journalist who wrote this glowing description of Mrs. So-and-So's millinery shop was probably paid a large sum of money for the "puff"? The result to the girl was, of course, practical ruin. She paid the £50 for a three months' course of instruction, on the understanding that after that time she was to be found paid employment,

Now the girl had a real gift for millinery; she had been accustomed to trim hats and make bonnets constantly for her friends and relations, and her taste was acknowledged to be extremely good. She found herself, however, set to work with twenty other girls, all of whom had paid £50 on the strength of these ornamental advertisements to learn a "paying" trade. All of these twenty apprentices also were given definite promises of work on showing proficiency at the end of the three months. They made and trimmed all the hats, bonnets, and old ladies' dress caps, which were sold in the shop at extravagant prices. There were cards put in the show-room stating that Mrs. — employed French milliners for her work. These girls, as their time of apprenticeship expired, were sent adrift, their places being taken by others who had been in training for a month or two. In this way the proprietress ensured a constant supply of capable workers, and at the same time replenished her coffers with additional fees from the new milliners. Of course she was never able to find appointments for any of the girls; in fact, one could hardly believe that she had ever intended to do so. The girl I knew came to visit a cousin, with whom I was having tea one day, and she told the story of the shameful treatment she had received. She had worked in this shop every day without a break, from eight in the morning till eight or nine in the evening, without one penny of salary, and



at the end of her time she lost her £50 and was cast adrift. I thought it would be a splendid experiment for me to get into this sweating den and gain a personal knowledge of this fraudulent method of obtaining money from girls who were anxious to equip themselves for a trade. I was not in a position, however, to throw away £50, and I determined that the contract I signed should be seen and revised by a lawyer, a friend of mine, who is an expert in such matters. I duly presented myself at this "millinery school" one morning, and was received in the most courteous manner possible. The lady had indeed "kissed the blarney-stone" and her words were sweet as honey. She explained to me how lucrative a calling millinery was, how easy it was to make £500 a year in the trade, and she added: "You see, my dear, if a lady of position like myself can afford to take up business of this sort without losing caste, and make a real success of it, no one need be ashamed or afraid of learning the work," and she added: "There is always room at the top; good milliners are really very scarce in London."

I professed myself charmed at the prospect, and was handed a contract which I was to sign there and then. I, however, explained to the lady that I must take it home and read it over. After a great deal of hesitation, she agreed that I should do this, and I proceeded straightway to my lawyer. He read the contract over, and laughed, saying:

"Well, they say women have no head for business; no man could have made a sharper or harder contract than this. However, I'll put in a word or two which, without seeming to alter the meaning, will give you a means of escape should you want to break the contract and get your money back."

I was very anxious about this matter, and said:

"You will make it quite sure, won't you, for I cannot afford

to present Mrs. — with £50 ; I don't get my money quite so easily as she does ? ”

“ Oh, yes,” said my friend, “ I will make that all right ; and in any case, she will not dare to take the matter into court when she knows that you have had advice beforehand. The trouble with these matters is,” he continued, “ the fact that girls and women will enter into any agreement and contract in the most careless manner, without taking legal advice about it ; consequently they find themselves, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, victims of some person sharper than themselves.”

The alterations having been made in the contract, I returned next day to the shop. I said that I was willing now to sign the contract, and added carelessly that I had just made one or two small differences in it, as, owing to circumstances, I might find myself called away for a week or so before the legal expiry of my term.

“ Oh,” said the lady, smiling, “ that will not make any difference.”

She read over the revised contract, frowned a little, but did not seem afraid to trust to it. She made me sign it, and signed it herself, and then gave me another copy, into which I inserted the changes my lawyer had made. This was duly signed. I gave her a cheque for £50, and my apprenticeship was sealed. This was on a Thursday, and I was to begin work on the following Monday morning. Duly at eight o'clock I presented myself. There was a charwoman employed to sweep the shop and to whiten the steps. All the rest of the work was done by the apprentices. Some of the more advanced ones “ dressed ” the window, while others who, like myself, were fresh hands, dusted the boxes of ribbons and flowers, and the show-cases. By half-past nine o'clock the shop and show-rooms were in order, and we were

seated in a little back room. When I entered, there were seventeen girls employed, each of whom had paid £50, which gave the owner of the "school" a capital of £850. She had on an average between twelve and fifteen new apprentices every three months, so that her capital was always increasing. For the first week my work consisted in opening and untwisting rolls of wire, putting in linings, tacking ribbons and feathers where they had been pinned in by the more experienced hands, fetching and carrying boxes, and at the end of the day packing away all the goods and tidying up the shop and workroom. We were allowed three quarters of an hour for dinner at twelve o'clock, and the girls went out in twos and threes, there being someone always in the workroom, so that some of us did not get our meal till nearly two o'clock, and even three. Half an hour was allowed for tea, which was taken in the same way. The girls began to go out for this meal at four o'clock, and went by relays till about half-past six. There was no regularity as to the time for meals.

I very soon was made aware of the discontent that prevailed among the more ambitious of the girls, who had been there two months, or even more, and had not been advanced to the better and more finished work. I studied in this place for three weeks, and got thoroughly well acquainted with the whole routine of the place. The profits accruing from the work were exceedingly good. A hat costing in materials and workmanship six shillings, was priced in the shop from one guinea to thirty-five shillings. Streams of fashionable ladies came in all day. For one week I was employed to fetch and carry in the show-room. What a revelation of human vanity it was! Old women, painted and powdered, with elaborately-dressed hair, would come in and try on, perhaps twenty or thirty hats, and examine themselves critically in the great

mirrors that lined the walls. They might better have been thinking of the next world, for their pilgrimage in this was more than three-parts done, and they certainly succeeded in deceiving no one but themselves as to their age. To me, with an Eastern's idea of the dignity of years, there seemed something horrible in these masquerading women, whom no young person could honour or respect. In the East, grey hairs are a sign of honour, and youth is obliged to pay a tribute of respect to such symbols of experience. Among the Arabs, no unbearded youth ever speaks in the presence of a bearded man unless he be addressed first, and young people will always stand up and remain standing in the presence of their elders; but in the West such instances of respect have long since become unfashionable, and partly, I think, age has itself to blame for being considered a dishonour. The way these old women flouted and posed would have been amusing had it not been so pathetic. Even after trying on twenty or thirty hats, they would go away without purchasing anything. At other times, one would come in and perhaps order, or buy immediately, three or four hats in one day. There seems to be a craze for new hats in this country, and most extraordinary and weird are the shapes that they take. The weary apprentices worked hour in and hour out without rest or change. After three weeks I felt I had had enough, and as I had learned very little more of the trade than when I went in, I considered myself justified in leaving. I went to Mrs. — and explained to her, that according to her advertisement I expected to be set to skilled work, or rather to be given definite instruction in all the branches of millinery, and as the forewoman had far too much to do to allow of her teaching any of the apprentices, I declared that I wished to withdraw from the contract. Of course she was extremely angry, and absolutely refused to return me the £50, or any part of it. I bade her



good morning and departed. I went straight to my lawyer, explained everything to him, told him how there was no definite instruction given to the apprentices, how Mrs ——— had never found paid work for any of her workers, and gave instances of new apprentices taking the place of those who were sent adrift without any position being found for them. My lawyer sent her a very carefully expressed and explicit letter, stating that unless my £50 was forthcoming the matter would have to be decided in court. After a great deal of correspondence, Mrs. ——— evidently decided that the game was not worth the candle. She knew perfectly well that she was not in a position to face judicial inquiry into her operations, and she sent me back £40, deducting £10 for loss of material and time. So much for my experience in a West End millinery establishment. Now comes a picture of life in a Piccadilly workroom.

On this occasion I managed to get employment as a sewing girl, without a premium. It was a large and fashionable establishment, with a ground-floor show-room and upstairs and basement workrooms—horrible little stuffy places, with inadequate ventilation and bad light. There were thirty girls employed in this place. I, of course, at first had nothing to do with the show-room, and when later on Madame, the proprietress, finding me willing and always presentably dressed, took to giving me jobs to do in the show-room, and employing me to write down measurements, hold pins, and so forth, I found opportunities of making myself acquainted with the details of the business. I maintained a discreet silence, and never spoke unless I was spoken to. I never was reprimanded by the forewoman for being idle or gossiping in the workroom. Madame evidently noticed this trait, and became careless of what was said and done in my presence, and in this way I obtained much information which otherwise I would probably not have been able to do. It was at the beginning of the



summer season when I took up work in this shop. Orders were coming in fast. All day long ladies came to choose their gowns and to be fitted. Many of them were content with nothing less than an original model, something that had to be designed and made especially for the individual. Of course Madame was always ready to do this, and it only meant an extra charge of five or ten guineas for the costume. The originality generally consisted in the lady's getting what five or six other ladies from various localities had been given before, with perhaps the variation of a few tucks or frills, or the addition of a yoke or couple of pleats. Modern fashion does not lend itself to any excess of originality. I remember being one day with a man friend in an omnibus going from Victoria to Piccadilly. It was the season when green was the fashionable colour, and ladies went about adorned with hats, on the back of which perched a composite bird of green. Now Nature has not been prodigal in the matter of green birds, and the number of these creatures known to naturalists would probably not be more than half a dozen, and one would hardly suppose that parrots and green pigeons, which are the commonest birds whose plumage is of this hue, were fitting ornaments for ladies' headgear. However, by the time we had travelled from Victoria to Piccadilly, there had been thirteen ladies in that 'bus, every single one of whom wore identically the same sort of hat, trimmed in exactly the same manner, with the exception that the green bird was of a different variety, and the ribbons perhaps were a trifle varied. The absolute sameness of the hats was so remarkable that we both noticed it and laughed. Indeed, it is this extreme difficulty of procuring anything really suitable except at enormous expense and a vast expenditure of time and trouble that made me decide on wearing Indian costume for all my public work. I was constantly obliged to go among people

who thought nothing of spending from £40 to £200 on a single costume, and it was necessary for my professional success that I should be well and suitably attired. I had so much work to do, and was kept so busy that I found, after a time, it was absolutely impossible for me to contend with insolent and expensive dressmakers. I could hardly ever get a dress made according to my own ideas, and the trouble I experienced was so extreme that I solved the difficulty for ever by electing to wear nothing but Indian dress for my public work. In this way I saved myself many hours of vexatious trying on, and much useless expense. For the majority of ladies, however, life would lose its savour if they were denied the pleasure of spending hours every day at their dressmakers' and milliners'; time seems to be a commodity of so little value. From the people whose chief occupation in life is to dress themselves and amuse themselves any appreciation of the value of time is not to be expected. There is nothing like idleness and vanity for making people selfish and cruel.

Some of the revelations of dishonour and meanness which I had while working in this Piccadilly shop disillusioned me of any ideas I possessed of the responsibilities entertained by those of great position or wealth. There used to come to Madame's a certain lady who is extremely well known in society for her beauty and her taste in dress. She is reputed to be one of the best-dressed women in London, and to have such a reputation is considered better, in these days, than godliness or virtue. She had been a customer of Madame's for about five years, during which time she had purchased clothes to the value of some £6,000. Of course she dealt extensively with other West End houses as well, and no doubt owed them all money. About once a week she used to come in, and her visits were generally of two or

three hours' duration. She would order some article of apparel, and try on other goods which had been previously commissioned, and then would ensue the usual dispute between her and Madame about the payment of the bills. The dressmaker would say: "Madame is, of course, aware that this will bring her bill up to—say, £550 for this season's goods; and of course Madame understands that, being a working woman, I am not able to supply Madame with these goods until some portion of this bill is paid."

Then Madame would reply: "Really, Madame, I think you are a most ungrateful woman: I have introduced to you at least ten good customers this season."

"Ah, but," the milliner would reply, "Madame will not forget, of course, that she has had a commission of 20 per cent. on each £100 order given by customers so introduced."

"Well, that is not very much," said the lady. "I don't see why you should be so troublesome about your miserable bills; you know, of course, I will pay some time."

"Yes, Madame; but my work-people have to be paid every week."

"Well, I have nothing to do with that; if you are going to become troublesome, I shall simply be obliged to go to someone else."

"Madame knows," the milliner would say anxiously, "I would not like to offend her; at the same time, it is positively necessary that something should be paid on the bill. I don't ask for a very large amount: could not Madame pay £200 or £300?"

"£200 or £300!" shrieked the customer. "My dear good woman, I have not two or three hundred pence unless it turns up from somewhere." And so these disputes would go on time after time, and instead of paying the bill this

honourable lady would beg Madame to lend her £5 or £10 in cash. On some occasions Madame would do so. If she lent her £5, the amount would go down in the bill as "sundries," £15. Again, when matters grew very strained, this lady would go in with a cheque from some man, and before she would make it over to Madame, she would insist on having some part of it in cash for herself. Often she was accompanied to the show-room by some vapid, idle-looking man about town, who would sit and wait for her, or exchange remarks with her while she was being fitted, and sometimes she would issue forth in one of her new "creations" to dazzle the eyes of her admirer. This woman has a husband and some bonny-looking children. What becomes of these when she is engaged in the arduous business of dressing and amusing herself I am not able to say. Unfortunately, this is no uncommon picture of a London dressmaker's establishment. I could give a dozen instances, but this is enough to show the fearful responsibility that lies on society of creating a better public opinion in all matters regarding honour and justice. Day after day, in this miserable little workroom, half-starved and ailing girls were kept working at high pressure on wages which ranged from four shillings to thirty shillings a week. They had no time to live, but existed from day to day as the slaves of society.

On one occasion, when I was there, a fearful confusion and panic took place about ten o'clock one night. There were thirty of us working as fast as our needles would fly in the workroom, to finish some dresses which had been ordered for a special function. A message came up from Madame—the one word "Inspector." We heard voices downstairs. In the twinkling of an eye, before the unwelcome visitor had time to climb the stairs, most of the work had been put away, and all



the girls except two, who were resident in the house, were hidden behind wardrobes and curtains. The lady inspector entered. It was explained to her that the women she saw were engaged in tidying and putting away work which had been completed before the shop closed. Of course she saw signs of hurried confusion that her arrival had caused, but there was nothing definite she could lay hold of to make a case against Madame. Meanwhile we, from our hiding-places, could hardly contain ourselves, tired as we were, with laughter at the way the inspector was duped. Madame was with her, suave and gracious as you like, and they descended together. When the front door was shut and all was safe, we emerged from our hiding-places, and Madame came up so good-humoured and smiling that the poor, tired creatures she was sweating in defiance of the law were almost persuaded that she was hardly dealt with. She was so elated at the narrow escape she had had, and the good work that had been done, that to encourage us to stay till two o'clock that morning she had two great pots of tea brought up, and some bread and butter and cake, and we were regaled with the feast at the dead hour of night. Of course we stayed till the work was finished, which meant that some of us did not reach home till four o'clock, and we had to be back at work again at eight.

The most curious of the chapters in the history of sweating must surely be those which tell of the unwillingness of the workers to have their wrongs adjusted ; so great is their fear that they will lose their employment altogether that they will connive and join hands with their employers in hoodwinking the inspectors, and in breaking the law also.



## CHAPTER XI

### WOMEN WHO WORK AND BABES WHO WEEP—WHAT “HOME INDUSTRIES” MEAN

So much for the sweating shops in the West End, and now to travel eastward, where our poorer sisters pay with life and sight and health—the price of this accursed system.

Since the days when Charles Kingsley, in “Alton Locke,” threw a lurid light on the dark ways of “sweating,” it would seem that very little headway has been made against this nefarious system, which still continues not only to exist, but to thrive, and that in spite of many enactments and Acts of Parliament dealing with the matter.

My knowledge of the existence of some of the evils of “sweating” is personal. The first time I came into actual touch with some of these slaves in England, I was startled at the ease with which it is possible to drive the proverbial “coach-and-four” through Acts of Parliament.

One day as I was returning home through a part of Brixton, I noticed in the window of one of the houses a card setting forth the fact that the dressmaker within (a German) required apprentices. As I passed, several girls came up from the area door and walked down the street in front of me. I heard some of their remarks. One said: “She’s a regular beast, she is! The way she treats that girl’s something shameful!” I did not follow the conversation further; but as I was waiting at the station, I bought a local paper, and

glancing through the advertisements, I was struck by one which gave the address of the same house that I had lately passed, where the card in the window indicated that the lady who advertised in the paper was one and the same person. The advertisement stated that an apprentice would be received by a dressmaker and taught the trade for a small premium. With the memory of the scrap of conversation overheard in the street still ringing in my ears, I resolved that I would make an opportunity as soon as possible of investigating for myself the conditions of life in a dressmaker's shop.

A couple of weeks later I made my way to the same house, carrying the advertisement in my hand. I was admitted and interviewed by a stout, severe-looking woman, who spoke with a strong German accent. She asked me if I had done any work of the sort before. On being answered in the negative, she declared that "apprentices were more nuisance than they were worth," but added that if I could pay the premium down, she might take me in. I inquired how much this premium would be, and was informed that for £10 I would be given six months' training. The conditions were, that I must appear at eight o'clock every morning, and work nominally till 8 p.m., "but," said the lady who was to instruct me, "I don't have no nonsense—work is work, and it's got to be done." It did not require much intelligence to interpret this. I apprenticed myself.

The house where I worked was situated in one of those shabby-genteel streets that abound near the Brixton Road, a street in which poverty tries to hide itself behind clean but painfully cheap and mended lace curtains.

Before entering on a further description, it will be well to state that there are clauses in the Factory Act which limit the hours of work for children under fourteen; there are other sections of the same Act that protect young persons under the age of

eighteen, employed in a factory. I knew these regulations, but desired to see how they worked in private places of employment. In the house in this delectable street where I apprenticed myself, I discovered a sufferer totally unprotected by any section of the Act.

“Madame Bavard,” as I will call the German slave-driver who occupied this house, and with whom I made only too close an acquaintance, was a dressmaker in a small way. She employed, chiefly, apprentices who gave her a small premium, and worked for a certain time without wages. At the expiration of that period, they were discharged, and new apprentices took their places, so Madame Bavard’s income never failed.

It is not with these young people, however, that I wish to deal, miserable as their lives undoubtedly were, for Madame Bavard took the utmost advantage of the long hours allowed her by Parliament to work her employees, and indeed we always worked overtime. But it is of the life of a little white-faced, worn-out child, just over fourteen, I want to write, who, ostensibly employed as a domestic servant, had to help in the workroom when not occupied with house-work.

She lived out, and every morning at 7 a.m., wet or fine, appeared at the house. Her duties commenced by lighting the fire and preparing the breakfast of her mistress. After tidying up, work in the dressmaking-room engaged her until it was time to prepare dinner. This meal finished, and its consequent cleaning-up done, there followed errands to shops for the matching of silks and ribbons; the taking home of finished work, and the catering for the household. Bed-making, scrubbing, window-cleaning, were the recreations of this factotum in the intervals of dressmaking—at which she toiled until 8 p.m. After this, having prepared our supper, she was allowed to go home—to reach which she had to

traverse a low neighbourhood. For all this drudgery, she was rewarded with the munificent sum of two shillings a week and her food.

The hours she actually spent in the business of the "workshop" did not exceed those prescribed by the law, which takes no cognisance of time given to domestic work : besides, having just passed the age of fourteen, she was liable under the clauses of the "Domestic Workshop" sections of the Factory Acts, to work from 6 a.m. till 9 p.m.—the hours permitted for those under eighteen. Imagine such hours of work for girls! I tried to help the little creature when possible, but was kept so hard at work that I had little time to do anything beside sewing.

It has been realised in America that the creation of a public sentiment must precede any reform, and to this end an Association—the Consumers' League, to which I have referred—is working in New York City. It was formed with the object of rousing customers to a sense of responsibility for the treatment of workers, and also to enforce obedience to the State Factory Law. Under the "Sweatshop" Law of the State of New York, the manufacture of articles of wearing apparel is now specifically forbidden in any tenement house without a license. For this, application must be made to a Factory Inspector, who, after ascertaining by inspection that the premises are in a clean and sanitary condition, grants such license.

In England, not only is there no license necessary, but no lists need be kept by employers of outside workers, unless "so required by the Secretary of State." So that the inspection of these "domestic workshops" depends upon the order of the Secretary of State.

This half-hearted measure goes far towards explaining the existence of the many fever-dens of the East End—



which, under a different system, would be summarily closed.

Within a stone's-throw of the inn chosen by Chaucer as the starting-place of his pilgrims, may be found a nest of the vilest courts in London. One morning I passed under an archway which leads from Tabard Street, on my way to investigate what I consider to be the very worst form of home industry that ever existed in this or any other country. An industry so bad that it attracts only the most destitute and hopeless, and them only at certain seasons of the year, and these must submit to the fate which forces them to toil for foreigners.

Fur-pulling is a terrible means for keeping body and soul together at any time; in the warm weather it is unbearable; therefore many who are driven to the filthy trade in the winter by want of food and lack of rent, desert it entirely in the summer, and seek more wholesome employment in the orchards and hop-fields of adjacent Kent. The trade is almost entirely in the hands of foreigners—Jews mostly—and they give out the work "on contract" to poor English workers. I do not personally know any foreigners engaged in the actual work.

Hare-skins and rabbit-skins are collected all over the country by dealers, and most of these find their way to this part of London. Many skins of this class are also imported from Australia, New Zealand, and elsewhere.

After they are plucked and cleaned, they are made up into bales under hydraulic pressure, and sent off to the manufacturing centres.

The work of a fur-puller consists in removing the long, coarse hairs from the skins, allowing the soft, down-like fur to remain: this is made into felt. Nothing, however, is wasted. The coarse hair that is torn out is used to stuff cheap



mattresses, and the skin itself is boiled down to make glue and size.

After much inquiry, I at last found the home of a fur-puller. She occupied a small, four-roomed cottage hidden away in a dark alley—a pestilential place indeed! On either side, the houses were overtopped by huge factory buildings which backed on to the cottages and shut them out from sunshine and fresh air. Perhaps it was for this reason that the place was chosen: fur-pullers object to too much air, the slightest draught makes their work almost impossible. It drives the fine hair and fluff with which the work-places of these people is impregnated into their eyes, nostrils, and lungs. It is in this impalpable dust that the chief danger of this unsavoury occupation lies, bronchial catarrh and “fur fever” are two diseases which attack the young worker, and are caused by inhaling this “fluff” and dust.

When I entered the cottage, I at once became acquainted with this distressing feature of the trade. The fluff was everywhere, on the floor, walls, ceilings, and staircases. The place also reeked with the sickly smell of decaying skins, which was so nauseating, that when I got into the room where the “pulling” was actually being done, I felt, for a moment, as if I could not breathe. Not only did the fine hair and dust enter my lungs at every breath, but the overpowering stench arising from the skins, that were heaped everywhere, made me almost sick. Skins were piled upon the table, on which also stood some crockery, denoting that food had been taken recently in this horrible place. In the corner stood a miserable bed—on which also was piled a heap of skins—and in the midst of all this filthy horror a little baby lay fast asleep.

To prevent draught, the window was tightly closed, and for the same reason the door had been tightly shut behind me. In this room three women were working. They were sitting

on low stools with a rough wooden trough in front of them. By the side of each was piled a number of skins ; those on which they worked were held in the left hand and between the knees, while the right hand grasped a short knife, and on the thumb was worn a kind of guard fastened like a finger-stall. Seizing the long, coarse hairs between the thumb and the edge of the knife, with a wrench they were torn out, and thrown into the trough in front. Afterwards, this hair is carefully collected and taken to the factory. Sixty skins are supposed to produce two pounds of "fluff," as this hair is called. / The pay for this work, notwithstanding its unpleasant nature, is extremely poor. / An experienced puller can only earn about one and sixpence a day when engaged on some of the skins ; a bundle of sixty is called a "turn," and the pullers receive from sevenpence to one and sixpence a "turn." The average price paid is about elevenpence or a shilling. For "furriners," as the Australian and New Zealand furs are called, a slightly higher rate is given, as they take longer to "pull."

The women have to provide their knives and finger-guards from their wages, and the occasional sharpening of the knives is also paid for by the workers. The work is taken home at midday, and is paid for on delivery.

It is a wretched, ill-paid, unhealthy trade. May Heaven help those engaged in it ! Many fur-pullers, however, do not consider their trade unhealthy. "Uncomfortable at first, but you soon get used to it," one woman said. "Dust ! lor, we don't mind that. We eats it, drinks it, and sleeps on it," said another. "And die on it," she might have added.

"People employing others in this trade ought to be prosecuted by the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals," said a man from whom I inquired the way to the home of a fur-puller.

There is an industry, however, which brings some beauty into the lives of those engaged at it—albeit their purses may be no heavier than those of others who have enlisted our sympathies.

Artificial flower-making, as practised in France, becomes an art; in England it is too often a bondage, and rarely more than a poorly-paid trade. A Parisian girl wishing to learn this business is taught something of botany, and studies natural flowers, to gain a knowledge of their structure and tints. She learns to copy faithfully every part of a flower—leaf, bud, and blossom. Herein probably lies the secret of French supremacy in this particular line. For years the world has looked to France for artificial flowers. Only once during the last half century has she disappointed her clients, and that was during the dark days of the Franco-Prussian War, when Paris was besieged, and London became the centre of the artificial flower trade. That was a golden time for English manufacturers! Prosperity, however, in this line did not last. The lack of taste and talent in England enabled France to recover the trade directly the war was over, and in London it fell away to what we now find it, a second-rate and poorly-paid one.

I am aware that a healthy interest is at present being taken in this industry, and that several firms are endeavouring to raise the tone of the English flower market. It is to be hoped they will succeed; for the making of artificial flowers is a trade pre-eminently suited to women and home-work.

I have two young friends in Islington, who earn a living at this trade, and it was to them I went, when seeking to enter the "Profession." A description of their home and manner of working may be interesting. They are cousins and live together, occupying two unfurnished rooms, for which they pay seven shillings a week. One room they use as a bedroom,

the other as a sitting and work room. They are employed by a wholesale firm whose business premises are situated at Clerkenwell. As they are very clever and very diligent, they earn a fairly good living. Their day commences about 7.30 a.m. Having cooked and eaten their breakfast, they start work, adhering to the same hours they used to keep in the days when they both made flowers in a factory, although, as they point out, they really work fewer hours now, because they spend no time going to or coming from business.

My friends are chiefly engaged in cheap rose-making; this is the best paid branch of that class of work, and only clever hands are engaged upon it. It is paid for at the rate of two and sixpence a gross, and each flower must have leaves, and at least one bud. Out of this money glue has to be provided, as well as several other necessary odds and ends.

By working hard for about ten hours a day, they are able, each, to earn an average of fifteen shilling a week. Not an enormous sum for an artistic trade that requires skill and patience!

Through their introduction I became acquainted with a poor woman who worked on the cheapest and commonest kinds of artificial flowers, assisted by a crippled daughter. Their home was one of the neatest, brightest little places I have ever seen amongst the poor homes I have visited. As is usual with the respectable poor, it contained two rooms. I have generally found that where a number of persons are content to live in one room without an effort to acquire more, it is either that they have put themselves into bondage with the publican and money-lender, and have lost all ambition and strength of character, or they live in a neighbourhood where the property is in the hands of dishonest landlords—aliens mostly. It is not, however, always poverty that drives a family into one room—a cabinet-maker who did small work at



home, regularly moved into one room in the winter, "because he did not like to go to bed in the cold." It did not seem to occur to the man that a fire in the bedroom would have obviated this inconvenience—had he given up his beer, he could have afforded the fire and two rooms.

To return to the widow and her daughter: as I say, they occupied two rooms, one of which they used as their workplace: The afternoon I called on them, this room looked quite gay with the coloured material on which they were working. The daughter was seated on a sofa, surrounded with pillows, busily engaged making bunches of violets—this is the worst paid of all the branches—she received  $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. only for a gross of blossoms. It was interesting to watch the thin white fingers of this poor crippled girl deftly forming the pretty blooms, while her mother occupied herself in making cornflowers, paid for at the rate of one and sixpence a gross. By working early and late, they were able to earn about fifteen shillings a week, and had but one complaint—trade was slack! "We had to sit idle two days last week," said the daughter, with a wan smile.

"I don't know," said the mother, "if they will give me any more out this week when I take these back. We don't mind if we can earn enough to pay the rent; it takes such a little to keep us, and anything is better than the 'big house.'"

I have found that the fear of the big house—that is, the Union—is a large factor in modern commercialism. To take work at any price rather than go into the workhouse is the resolve of many a poor worker, and the employer often trades on this, and endeavours to find out just how low he can cut the price before his employé is forced into the Union.

The Saturday morning after, when I called on my poor friends, I found them in great distress. The mother had taken the flowers to the factory, but had unfortunately



offended the forewoman, whose duty it is to take in and examine the flowers made by the outworkers. This person had spitefully refused to pass more than half the poor woman's work, therefore she had returned home with scarcely any money, as from the amount due to her for the work accepted, there had to be deducted the cost of the material used on the flowers which were condemned.

Both mother and daughter were in tears. I determined to help them, and after a deal of persuasion I induced the mother to return with me and interview her employer. We insisted on seeing this gentleman. I put the flowers before him and asked him to point out in what way they were defective. He proved to be not altogether an unreasonable man. After demurring, not so much at the quality of the work, as on the grounds of his having "to keep up the authority of the forewoman, don't you know!" he finally passed the work himself, and the widow got her mite.

// In this trade, as in many others of the same class, the facilities for employing children is a great temptation to the poor home-worker. School is often neglected, and the School Board visitor is met with every excuse and subterfuge imaginable. "If the kids don't help, I can't make both ends meet," is a remark one often hears. And Tommy and Lizzie, the home-worker's babies, become conscripts in the army of labour at an age when the children of the rich have barely started at the kindergarten class. /

If one visits the streets in the houses of which much home-work is being done, one will only notice—during the interval of school-time—the smallest children playing; the others are busy helping to earn their dinners.

An amusing story is told of a little girl from Hoxton, who saw real roses for the first time, and wanted to know who made them. Being told "God," she answered that "Gawd

made better flowers than her Aunt Poll ; 'spects He has more time to stick 'em together."

Take, for instance, match-box making. Few fingers are too old and few too tiny to help the match-box maker ; children and old people, therefore, are engaged in this occupation perhaps more than in any other. It is a trade that requires but little training, and is very quickly learned. Much diligence and industry—but little skill—is required to earn a scanty livelihood. The pay for this work is so mean that an adult, unassisted by children, could not earn a living, and few makers work without this help. This industry is the last resource of the very poor, and the first occupation of their children.

That matches are too cheap, is the verdict of every person to whom I have spoken on the subject. No one would mind, as far as I can discover, if matches cost twice as much as they do now. If twice as much was paid for box-making, the lives of many poor women and numbers of children would be rendered more endurable. Matches are cheapened at the cost of human happiness. Weary, ill-fed women, and mirthless, playless children—these are the prices to be added to the cheap box of matches.

Some economists tell us that we cannot pay more for our match manufacture because of foreign competitors, that we have to sell matches cheap, not because the consumers will not pay more, but because the foreign manufacturer supplies his so cheaply. If this is so, the sooner some check is put upon this dumping, so that the trade may be in a position to pay a living wage to those engaged in it, the better it will be for many of our women and children.

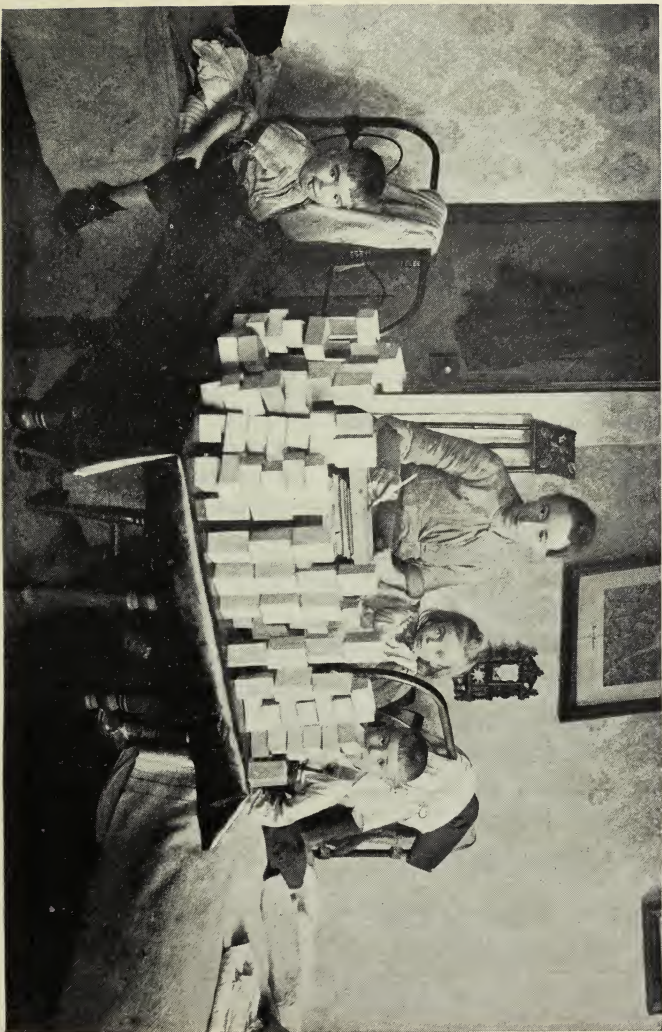
My friend, Mrs. R., is a match-box maker, and she lives in a small street near Bow Road. She is a married woman with five children. Her husband describes himself as a "casual

labourer." I think a better description would be "confirmed loafer." The woman supports herself and her children by her match-box making. Her husband earns but little, and what he earns is spent in beer and tobacco. Mrs. R. rents three rooms for six shillings per week. In one room a lodger sleeps with two of her boys; for this accommodation he pays two shillings a week, thus reducing her rent to four shillings. Her average earnings, when all her children are well, she estimates to be about fourteen shillings a week.

"It runs a bit more when the children 'ave their 'olidays," was one of her remarks. I took a room in a house next to hers and joined her for a little time at her trade.

The daily work in this house commenced as early as 6.30 a.m. A little work was done and then breakfast had to be prepared. We did not fare sumptuously. Weak tea, bread and treacle for the children, and bread and margarine for the elder ones. This eaten, the children went off to school and the man to "loaf." Mrs. R. and I worked at box-making all the morning. Any tidying up or domestic duties were left to the children to do.

A short time after twelve noon, the little ones used to return from school. One of the tables was cleared of the materials used in the box-making, and a meagre dinner hurriedly prepared and placed upon it—prepared not by the woman, for she had to continue working, but by one of the elder children. After bolting their food, these victims of toil began work at once. The dinner usually consisted of bread and cheese. On rare occasions there was a bit of bacon or fried fish; at times, in the winter, the children told me they fetched soup from a neighbouring charitable institution. Very little time was spent over meals in this house: the table was cleared, and the children continued work until the last minute before departing for school. The youngest, a tot of five years old,



THE MATCHMAKER'S HOME—BABES WHO TOIL.





THE OLD CLOTHES MARKET AT ROME, WHERE INTENDING EMIGRANTS FIND THEIR OUTFITS.



"elped muvver" by pressing down the pasted tissue-paper which is fastened round the boxes to keep them together.

Every one of the family, except the lazy father, had his or her particular work to do on the boxes. The mother folded the material into shape, and put on the printed paper ; another made the "drawer," as the inside is called. One of the biggest children fastened on sand-papers on which the match is struck. This is the work that the little ones most object to, "it 'urts yer fingers so !" Poor little fingers, that ought to have been making daisy-chains, or picking meadow flowers on those warm June days I was with them working—or rather slaving—for existence in a hot, stuffy room.

One of the very smallest of the children "boxed up," as fitting the "drawers" into the "covers" is called. This is absolutely wasted labour, because they have to be separated in the factory before they can be filled. Match-box makers in factories are not asked to do this, but home workers are obliged to deliver theirs so fitted.

The price that Mrs. R. was paid for her work is the price that rules throughout the trade— $2\frac{1}{4}$ d. per gross. Think of it ! 288 separate articles, from the drawer to the cover, to be handled for  $2\frac{1}{4}$ d ! The price is monstrous ! Even the deft fingers of this woman could not earn a penny an hour unless she was assisted by her children, and then, all she could hope to make was about twopence an hour. Out of this, she had to provide fire to dry the boxes, paste for fastening, and hemp to bind the boxes up in parcels when finished, for that is how they must be delivered at the factory. Then there is the time taken up in carrying the finished work there, the waiting while the parcels are counted and the work examined, and for fresh work to be given out. Mrs. R. was known as a "steady hand." She always returned her work at the time she was asked to do, therefore she obtained regular employ-

ment—but what an employment ! / A veritable life of slavery. No time for motherhood, affection, or pleasure. Life one continual struggle, with the wolf “Hunger” ever on her very hearth-stone ! Home a factory, her children human machines, deprived of all that makes child-life rosy and bright, their health undermined by long hours spent in the close confinement of overfull rooms—work, school, and work again till bed-time—that was the daily routine.

“We’ve got to work, or we will starve,” Mrs. R. impressed on me. Why? Well, perhaps first, because there is no law to compel men of the drunken, loafing type of this father, to work and support their families in a proper manner. Secondly, because of the curse of the foreign competition which forces the wages of this industry down below a living margin. /

Surely it is a disgrace to our civilisation that any commodity should be produced at the expense of the health, strength, and happiness of frail women and children, who have to work long hours at a starving wage, in order that the consumer may be supplied at a cheap rate.

“Oh, God, to think that bread’s so dear,  
And flesh and blood so cheap.”

—HOOD.

“But the child’s sob curseth deeper in the silence,  
Than the strong man in his wrath.”

—*Cry of the Children.*

I was much struck during the descents I made into Poverty Kingdom to find in how many cases the distress, overwork, and evilly bad pay was due to the trades worked in being monopolised by foreigners. And then again, the utter misery of the lives of the workers caused by overcrowding, insanitary condition of the houses, inability to claim a sufficient water

supply, and all the ugly results of desperate over-population in certain districts, was due almost entirely to the fact that the property in those neighbourhoods had been, bit by bit, acquired by our alien friends.

If I have to use severe language in describing the lives of the poverty-stricken creatures who are engaged in home industries, it must not be supposed that I believe the blame rests with them, though I am bound to admit, sorrowfully enough, what will, I am sure, be acknowledged by every philanthropic society in England to be true, that a great deal of the want and destitution is caused by the fact that the men who ought to be supporting healthy and happy families by legitimate work, spend 95 per cent. of their earnings in the public-house—that is, if they are earning at all, as for the most part, the husbands of the women engaged in home employments are irredeemable loafers. The public-houses are very often held by foreigners, though this is not by any means universal. But there exists an evil as great, I deem it, as the public-house, which is virtually the invention and monopoly of aliens. This is the sister institution of the public-house—I speak of the pawn-shop, of which almost every street boasts one.

I found, during my life with the home-workers, that it was a usual practice of these distressed and over-driven people to walk out with a bundle containing almost all their worldly possessions on the Monday morning, to leave them on their way to work, at the pawn-shop—from which place they were redeemed on Saturday evening. In return for these clothes and household goods, they received small sums of money, for which I have known them to pay 100 and even 200 per cent.; but not being able to calculate, they could never be brought to see how fearfully expensive this manner of raising money was.

Among the several branches of the home industry trade into which I entered for the purpose of learning the conditions under which people employed in them live, was that of making petticoats—the silk petticoats and blouses one sees in most drapers' shops in London.

These two articles are made partly at home and partly in the workshops. I knew a woman who was in the petticoat trade, and another in the blouse-making industry. These workers allowed me to stay with them for a little time and find out how the work was done. The woman who made blouses lived in a room in one of the streets off the Euston Road ; about this locality there are a great many tailors' shops which are run by Germans, Poles, and Jews. The woman lived alone—she was a widow—and she procured for me a small room in the same house in order that I might be able to help her with her work. The room was a mere cupboard made of match-boarding. For this den I was obliged to pay half-a-crown a week. The house contained fifty people. I promised to pay my friend two and sixpence a week for teaching me the trade, and giving me work besides. I knew, of course, that I could not be a very valuable hand. I settled myself in the room one afternoon, and spent the evening with the woman, turning down the hems of the endless lengths of silk frills which were to be sewn on to the petticoats. It was agreed that in the morning I was to accompany the woman to the shop, and get from the "boss" some more work.

The tiny room was furnished with a small stove, upon which simple cooking might be done ; but as long as I was there I did not see the woman cook anything except a bit of bacon.

She generally went out and got a meal "of sorts" at some cheap eating-house in the neighbourhood—it saved time, she said. I have described these eating-houses before, they are all more or less alike. But what the woman always did have



ready was an enamelled tea-pot, full of an awful decoction she called tea, which rested on the stove all day and half the night, and was replenished with water from time to time. This drink the woman took while she worked. It kept her awake, she said, and "was comforting-like."

That night she worked till 2 a.m., and before I left the room we had folded up and made ready seven petticoats. Into these garments she had put literally hundreds of yards of stitching, providing the cotton herself, had made three button-holes for fastening the plaquet-hole of each one, sewing on three buttons to match, and putting two drawing ribbons into each garment. For each of these finished petticoats she received the magnificent sum of fourpence, the materials, except the sewing cotton, were provided, the garments and frills were cut out at the shop.

Next morning we went together to the shop. The woman handed in her work, which was minutely examined by the "boss" himself. He gave out to her another half-dozen petticoats, the cut-out silk for each being carefully folded together. Then she introduced me. I was so desperately anxious to find out where this man was sending the garments for final sale, that I forgot myself so far as to ask him where he sold them and for what price. I shall never forget the look he gave me—his face was absolutely distorted with passion. He poured forth such a volume of abuse, that I was really afraid he would commit some act of violence. My poor friend was frightened almost out of her wits. He threatened to turn us both out of the shop, but after a great deal of persuasion and humble apologies, he calmed down a little. I explained I was anxious for work myself, and thinking that he mightn't have any for me, hoped he might be able to recommend me to the people with whom he dealt. This seemed to make matters all right, for he gave the woman two extra petticoats for

me to sew, remarking politely that as "I was such a —— fool," I wouldn't be able to do more, and also threatening that if the work was not up to the mark, she would have to pay for the material spoilt. The materials, I suppose, at the most liberal estimation, could not have cost, at wholesale prices, above five shillings. We took home our work. I think, even when I was engaged once in cutting tin during a visit to a tin factory, my fingers have never ached more than they did after sixteen hours of almost continuous work at those detestable petticoats. For me there was a hope of change, but for the other poor toiler, nothing in the world to look forward to but death.

It would, of course, be extremely difficult to control this sort of work—the very employees themselves would endeavour to hide the evils of the system for fear of losing their only means of livelihood. It would be in such cases as these that the Consumers' League would set its machinery in motion—follow the petticoats from the Jew's shop back to the women's rooms where they were made, and then to the large houses which bought them wholesale. These garments would then be condemned as having been manufactured with what might be called the price of blood. Let us hope that no decent woman would purchase them.

I found afterwards that these very petticoats made by us were sold to a large, well-known West End firm, who, in their turn, sold them to customers for prices ranging from fifteen shillings to thirty shillings. What the Jew's profit was I am unable to say, but my experience with the class would convince me that he made an enormous profit on each. I have found that almost invariably the middleman, who is really the actual sweater, is a foreigner—either German or Polish.

My next essay with the needle was when I joined forces with a woman who made blouses. She lived near Paddington,

and also worked for a Jew. He had a shop in which he employed twenty-two women—all English—nearly all of them took away work to do at home besides. In the shop the blouses were cut out and sewn together—at home the finishing was done, any trimming that might be necessary, the making of button-holes, putting on of buttons or hooks, and folding the goods.

For work that occupied her from eight in the morning till eight at night, in the shop, with forty minutes for dinner in the middle of the day and half an hour for tea, and again the whole evening—except the hour that was spent in lighting her fire and getting some sort of meal ready, and in tidying her room—till one and two in the morning, my friend earned sixteen shillings a week. She turned out on an average from five to eight blouses a day. These were not of the very plain, cheap kind, but were made of pretty muslins and silk, were trimmed more or less elaborately with lace, and sold from six shillings to twenty shillings in a shop not far off.

## CHAPTER XII

### SIDE-LIGHTS ON ALIEN LIFE IN LONDON

HAVING returned to England from my visit to the Continent, with a great batch of immigrants from Hamburg, I rested a while, and then, after fulfilling some professional engagements, I undertook again another excursion among the outcast and poor. To accomplish this successfully, it was necessary, in a way, to get lost, to change one's personality one's dress, one's surroundings. This was accomplished by renting a room in a locality from where it was easy to sally forth in any guise, into the various slum districts selected for purposes of investigation. In this room was stored a large amount of carbolic, Keating's powder, and other disinfectants, and a varied assortment of old clothes to suit the different characters I intended to impersonate. To anyone studying the various grades of life in the working and submerged classes, it will of course be apparent that one disguise would not effectually carry any person through the various phases. For instance, a factory girl is different in a hundred small ways, in the fashion of her clothes, in her manner of walking and talking, from the girl employed in a small shop. Then again, a tramp is wholly different from a woman who obtains small jobs and seeks refuge in the various shelters. The coster girl has not much in common with the labourer's daughter, and a street singer is entirely different from an



organ-grinder. There are infinite varieties, and any impersonation to be successful requires an intimate study of the class, a quick adaptation of speech, and a very decided dramatic instinct. Among the necessary paraphernalia for accomplishing these disguises were several wigs of different sorts specially bought and arranged, a box of theatrical paints, and about twelve different sets of clothes. Before I really appreciated the difficulty of the undertaking, I went to several of the leading theatrical shops and overhauled their collection of "costumes" for flower-girls, factory girls, and other characters. These I found extremely picturesque and quite suitable for stage wear, but absolutely useless for my purpose. The only thing to do, then, was either to buy the clothes from the different people themselves, or else to make the selection in old clothes' shops. An expedition into Petticoat Lane proved very useful to me. Many visits to Covent Garden and to the New Cut and other slum districts gave me a tolerably correct idea of what I would require, and from various sources I managed to collect all the clothes necessary for my purpose. These were bought in various places—places not always savoury or hygienic, and to render them innocuous I had some boiled, and some disinfected, and all thoroughly aired. One of the most difficult things to manage successfully I found was the footgear. None of my own shoes could be got to present the desired appearance, and it took me days of hunting and manipulation before I got together the various pairs of shoes and boots which would carry me through the journeys I intended to make. It must not be understood that these investigations were carried out consecutively, for such an undertaking would be almost impossible, the hardships entailed being so extreme. The way I did the work was to leave my things in this room and to go away for a few days at a time. This was easy for me to accomplish, as being

continually away on lecturing tours or for professional engagements, it was not an unusual thing for me to be away from home, and I had two friends who always had my address, and knew to within a mile or so where I might be found. When I returned from the alien expedition in Europe, I was filled with a burning desire to make myself so completely master of the particulars of the subject from its various points of view, that I determined for a time to live in some of the alien quarters and also in those localities where the evils plant themselves upon the people, that I might know of the social and economic evils arising from this invasion, as well as any advantages that might accrue to the country or people from their presence among them.

The Royal Commission of Immigration went very fully into the manner of life of the foreign Jews who live in the East End of London. Many newspaper articles have also been published on this subject, so that I will only give here accounts of the lives of a few of the immigrants now in our midst. Every story recounted is a personal experience—not all were gleaned at one time, but the incidents and cases came within my personal knowledge while I was living and working among the London poor.

In one of the streets of the East End, in a neighbourhood that is now taken up almost entirely by foreign Jews, there is a house where conditions obtain that are characteristic of parts inhabited by aliens—that this is by no means an isolated case, I know, but I prefer to speak here only of what I have seen.

In this house there are several rooms which are occupied in the day-time, from 8 a.m. until 6 p.m., for purposes of "sweat-shop" operations. One of the rooms is about thirty feet long by eighteen feet wide, and in this room, when I knew it, there were twenty women working on coats and

trousers. They began work at eight in the morning and finished at 6 p.m. By 6.30 the sewing-machines in the room had all been moved to one side by the workers, the scraps and refuse of the day's work were brushed away into corners, and pallets were laid down upon the floor. From about seven o'clock there began a stream of Jewish workmen, who were given tickets in the room below, permitting them to occupy these pallets from 8 p.m. till 2 p.m.

At 2 p.m. these warm beds had to be vacated for other workers—these were bakers, who had been up all night. They came in with tickets permitting them to sleep from 2.30 to 7.30. Then the machines were brought out once more, the women arrived, and work began again. It is hardly necessary for me to describe the atmosphere of this room! It never was aired or unoccupied, and the women who worked in this hideous place had to perform their duties in an indescribably fetid and germ-laden air. I worked in this shop for two days, so I know.

The owners of it were two Polish Jews, and the rent they paid for the house was almost fabulous. All I need say is, that after my knowledge of their life in their own country, I cannot blame them for pursuing the same occupations, under the same conditions, here. The fault does not lie with them, but is due to the non-enforcement of the sanitary regulations.

I might add here another characteristic story touching the housing problem: I made friends with a constable at the London Docks. He had a little house in one of the streets close by. It was a comfortable cottage, and he had occupied it with his wife and two children for seven years. I met him one day, and he told me that he had been turned out of his house. I gazed at him in astonishment.

"But why?" I said. "You were such a good tenant."

The man in his spare time had painted the woodwork of the place, repapered the walls, and took an infinite pride in his little home.

"Oh," he said gloomily, "they got better tenants. I paid them only twelve shillings a week, but I improved the place, and added a lot of things to it; then the landlord gave me notice—said that the place was wanted by a foreigner, who was willing to pay thirty shillings a week for it."

In this case the incoming tenant converted the house into a lodging-house by night and a sweat-shop by day. Here were made those cheap flannelette dressing-gowns which may be seen in small drapers' shops in poor districts, marked from one shilling and ninepence to three shillings each. I got acquainted with one woman working there, and she told me that she earned threepence a day, and she worked for nine hours. I proved this statement to be absolutely correct.

In many cases in these overteeming streets the competition to obtain houses is so keen, that very often the tenant of a house will be offered a large sum of what is known as "key-money." For instance, two people desire the same house—one will hurry off to the outgoing tenant and say: "If you give me the keys before you leave, I will pay you a certain sum as 'key-money'!"

This sum ranges from 30s. to £20. The explanation of the "key-money" is, that as "possession is nine points of the law," the person who desires the house has a better chance of getting it from the landlord when he actually possesses the keys, than one who does not. The irony, however, comes in here: the landlord, not to be "bested" in the transaction, comes to the tenant and demands part of the key-money.

The consequence of the key-money system is, that there is an immense competition among the Jews of the East End who desire to become landlords for themselves. Indeed, the



rents have gone up to such an extent that persons of ordinary income find them prohibitive, and cannot live in the neighbourhood at all. I know houses in mean and filthy streets in the East End of London, whose rents are larger, in proportion to size, than those of houses in fashionable West End streets. I also know many English families I could name, who have been, through these circumstances, crushed out of the neighbourhoods they occupied, until they are living almost like beasts, herded into inconceivably small spaces. This is not an English characteristic ; these conditions are forced upon our people because there is no room for them.

Foreign ideas of propriety in some of the lodging-houses are quite unique. If, for instance, you walk through certain streets at night, and if an intelligent constable, or friend who knows the district, is willing to conduct you, you will see sights that will be a revelation. I have peeped through windows, and seen rooms of ordinary size occupied by four or five families. No efforts were made to screen off portions of the rooms, yet the people seemed to live very contentedly.

In one particular instance there was a father, mother, and grown son, making one family. A father, mother, two grown daughters and an infant made another family. A third family consisted of two sisters and a boy lodger ; eleven persons all occupying the same room at night.

I used to visit a family in a very poor district of London, who were well conducted and decent people. The father, it is true, spent far more than he ought to have done upon drink, which entailed upon the mother much harder work than would otherwise have been necessary. They had four little children, three boys and a girl, of whom they were very proud. The children were intelligent and healthy, although they lived in far from ideal conditions. The family had only

two rooms in a tenement house, where there was but one common staircase. Into this house came, one day, what may be called a flood of aliens ; twenty Italians came in and rented the two vacant rooms in the building. These people had but lately come into the country, and they had, as is usual, numbers of children.

These little creatures were filthily dirty and diseased, otherwise they were odd, bright, attractive children. What happened, however, was that they grew friendly with these four children of English parents, and three weeks after, all four of these children had ringworm, and one of them had caught some disease of the eyes, which eventually caused her to lose one of them altogether. From what I have seen in India, I think it must have been a sort of severe ophthalmia ; but I am not an expert in eye diseases ; I only know that the poor little girl suffered dreadfully.

I am acquainted with some Italians who make their living by organ-grinding, street-trading, ice-cream vending, and such occupations, who are, as far as they go, quiet and respectable people—personally, I like them very much. It is true, their ideas of hygiene are not what one might expect in an enlightened country ; but after my experience in Italy, I am quite willing to forgive them. That one of my ice-cream friends makes his ice-cream in the family's one living-room, and stores it under his bed, is not wrong to his way of thinking. The milk is obtained from a little shop in the neighbourhood, where it is exposed for as long as may be in a window open to the dusty street, and the ice-cream that is left over after the day's work is stored, with a good amount of ice, under the family bed, and is retailed next morning before the new supply is touched.

My next story is concerned with two Poles, who bought a small tailor's shop, not in the East End at all, but in a little

street off Fulham Road. These men were tailors by profession. The former owners of the shop had been an Englishman and his wife—the man died, and the woman went away into the country after selling her shop to these two foreigners. I happened to know two sisters who were employed in this shop and lived not very far off. One of them had earned sixteen shillings a week, and the other from twelve shillings to fourteen shillings, according to the state of trade. They had one room, which was kept in apple-pie order; they were devoted to each other, and were thoroughly good, hard-working girls—both English.

When the two Poles came into possession of the shop—they were not Jews, by the way—they changed the whole *ménage*. It is true that they gave these girls the option of working on at six shillings a week each, considering it splendid pay; when they refused, they put in their own people, and the girls lost their occupation, when times were bad and work was hard to get.

I give here a table of wages which can be accepted as coming from an authoritative source, and will throw some light on what Italians look for on coming to this country:

Brass workers, average pay per day, 1s. 6d.

Founders, 2s. 6d.

Machinists, 2s. 3d.

Masons, 2s. 3d.

Carpenters, 2s. 3d.

Workers in chemical products, 2s. 6d.

Workers in cotton, 1s. 3d.

Workers in wool, 1s. 4d.

Miners, 1s. 3d.

Farm labourers under contract, 8d.

Farm labourers not under contract, 5d.

Farm labourers not under contract in summer, 10d.

Farm labourers in harvest-time, 2s. 3d.

Women workers in silk, 6d.

Women workers in cotton, 10d.

Women workers in wool, 10d.

Women workers in country, 5d.

In Italy such wages would enable the labourers to live in fair comfort according to their ideas. In England, where rent is high and food dear, the wages mean a low standard of living, and such unfair competition with British labour, that ugly results to our own people follow.

The Royal Commission on Alien Immigration had much conflicting evidence to deal with, but on the labour question the following paragraph is included in their report :

“Leaving the skilled labour market out of the question, we think it proved that the industrial conditions under which a large number of aliens work in London, fall below the standard which ought, alike in the interests of the workmen and the community at large, to be maintained.”

Later on the following remarks appear :

“It must be recognised that the majority of these aliens arrive in this country in a state of comparative poverty. For the most part they make their way to certain portions of the East End of London. Here they find an insufficient house accommodation, and so being unwilling to leave the locality, they are housed under conditions most unfavourable to cleanliness and good sanitation.

“But as time proceeds, many of these men enter upon a different phase of existence. With the possession of greater



skill and knowledge, their earnings increase, and they are able to improve their modes of life. The balance of evidence before us is favourable to the aliens after they have reached this stage. They appear to be industrious and thrifty. One of the complaints against them is that their hours of labour are too long, and that their tendency is to grow rich."

Embodied in the report is a list of various classes of immigrants regarded as undesirable — criminal, diseased, weak-minded, and so on. If legislation were put in force to debar these from our shores, little or no complaint would be made.

With regard to the pauper alien, the problem is different, and it is with regard to him that the chief point with which the Alien Question concerns itself is raised. On the one hand, it is contended that a good and thrifty citizen, even if he be a poor one, is useful to any country; on the other, that the lowering of the market value of labour must be bad for those who have to make their living by labour. It cannot, however, be good for a country to have its trade gradually slip into the hands of foreigners, and the standard of living reduced to such a low level that no man can live decently, or bring up a family in health and comfort if he happens to belong to a trade that is commandeered by the German Jews or other foreigners. For instance, cabinet-making, which was once a flourishing trade, is now done almost entirely by aliens. These people live together like rabbits. They fill the hospitals, and send their children regularly to certain hospitals where they are recognised as suffering from "mal-nutrition," and given various foods and cod-liver oil. This fact I have from a well-known physician, who is attached to a big hospital.

Indeed, this alien pauper curse has grown to such an extent that the public is obliged to support them through the

hospitals. As in Chicago, so there are in London certain streets and localities peopled almost entirely by foreigners, these strangers having "eaten out" the original inhabitants. In England, however, it is the foreigner who preys on the native, which is perhaps a greater evil than has been shown to exist in America, where the native preys on the foreigner. The alien has always the choice of remaining in his own country.

One ugly feature of the Alien Question in Britain is the increasing number of criminal men who live on the earnings of immoral women. It must not be supposed for one instant that the victims of these awful creatures are only women of their own nationality. Among the many cases which have this year come before the police courts, a large percentage of the women victimised by men of this class have been English. Most workers among girls and women in England—that is to say, ladies belonging to the Metropolitan Association for Befriending Young Servants, members of the Travellers' Aid Society, or of the Girls' Friendly Society, or of Working Girls' Clubs, would be able to corroborate from personal experience the assertion, that in encouraging an indiscriminate number of undesirable aliens to enter this country, we are putting a premium on some of the most dastardly and insidious forms of vice. There are to-day in London scores of girls who, but for these hideous foreign vampires, would be following decent employment in domestic service, or other spheres of usefulness. I give two cases out of many that have come under my own personal knowledge of this traffic in English girls.

There was sent to me one day, with a recommendation from an office where she had applied for work, a young girl who was starting life as a typewriter. She had been educated in a convent school in the country, and was absolutely innocent

of any evil. I was not able at that time to find her a post, but gave her several letters to offices in the city where I knew many girl clerks were employed. She was not successful in obtaining immediate employment, though one firm promised to engage her at the end of six weeks, as a clerk of their own was leaving to be married. Then this girl did what thousands of girls in London and other large cities do every day. She went to a free library to look through the advertisements in the papers. In one leading London daily she found an advertisement offering good wages and permanent employment to a young girl. An address was given in the city where the applicants were invited to attend personally. This girl went immediately. In a little top-storied room in an obscure back lane, two foreign scoundrels were waiting for their victims. They received the girl very pleasantly, and she found that there had been many applicants, and three young girls were waiting for an interview at that moment. She was taken into an inner room, and it was explained to her that the position offered was in Antwerp. She was to have £2 a week and everything found; and she was to sign a paper binding herself to be ready to leave for her post on a certain date. The child was so overjoyed at the liberality of the salary offered, and so carried away with the idea of going abroad and seeing the world, that she signed the paper. Two days after, the woman with whom she was living, who was also known to me, accompanied the girl, who came to say good-bye. I might mention here that she was an orphan, and had to depend on herself for earning a living.

When I heard this story, and the promise offered, I inquired at once as to whether anyone had guaranteed the faith of these men at Antwerp. Of course such a question had never entered the girl's head. She had made no inquiries whatever, but had believed everything to be straightforward

on the strength of an advertisement. Both the woman with whom she was staying and I pointed out to her that she might be robbed or murdered, if she went abroad alone without protection. She was in genuine distress, for she had signed the paper and was to start in three days' time. However, I persuaded her to allow me to make inquiries about these men and their *bonâ fides*, and had to promise that in case of her losing the appointment through my interference, I would keep her until she could get some other post. It is hardly necessary to give details of the result of the inquiry; suffice it to say that the men were able to give no guarantee at all, and inquiries at Antwerp proved that they had no office or standing in that city whatever. Indeed, one of the men was a known bad character. They would have decoyed away this girl, who was sixteen years of age, and probably have flung her out into the street to earn money for them.

A case, also of traffic of this sort, which goes on constantly in London, was told me by a young governess. She also answered an advertisement. The post was represented to be that of governess to an only child. The child's mother, the advertisement stated, was dead, and the father required a young, accomplished, very bright and good-tempered governess-companion for his child. The girl was met in a good house in a well-known square by a lady who was very fashionably dressed, but who smelt strongly of drink; also she was painted and appeared to have dyed her hair. The girl instantly became doubtful, but was reassured when the lady informed her that she was the gentleman's sister, and was commissioned by him to interview the applicant for the position. She said that she liked this applicant and would offer her a salary of £75 a year and everything found, and added that the position was a most comfortable and desirable one. It was necessary, however, that the applicant should



take up the work the very next day, as the little girl would be coming up from the country, and her father did not wish her to be alone. The governess said she would let them know by that evening's post whether she would accept the position. The lady appeared dissatisfied, and said she could not remain in uncertainty. As everyone knows, it is no easy matter for a governess to obtain a post carrying so good a salary; the labour market is overcrowded with women seeking every conceivable kind of work. The girl had a mother and two young brothers who were partly dependent on her exertions; she hesitated a few minutes and then accepted the place, agreeing to come back the next evening. According to promise she arrived the next day, and was shown into a splendid suite of apartments. There were three rooms, opening one into the other, and she was told that one was to be hers. She noticed that there was no door between her room and the next, which seemed a large dressing-room, an open archway with a curtain between was the only partition. She hastily took off her things and went downstairs, where she was met by another woman, whose appearance and general characteristics seemed to be much the same as those of the lady she had seen the day before. The girl asked her where her charge was, and was told that the little girl had not yet arrived. Then she asked the lady where the gentleman's sister was.

"Oh," said the woman, "she is gone to fetch his daughter from the country."

It grew dusk, and still there was no sign of the little girl nor of the woman the governess had seen first, neither were there any servants visible. The poor girl went up to her room and began unpacking a few of her things, when presently a voice said :

"May I come in?"

Hardly knowing what she did, she said "Yes," and a foreign man entered the room. The girl was not a little startled, and when he explained that he was her employer, she said she would rather see him downstairs.

The man said: "Oh, very well," and left her.

Then instantly some instinct seemed to warn the girl that she had placed herself in a very dangerous position. She remembered that she had seen no servants, and grew almost hysterical as she pictured to herself the hopelessness of her position, if indeed she had been trapped.

However, she went downstairs and found both the man and woman in the dining-room, where cake and wine were placed on the table. They asked her to have some refreshment, which she declined. She realised that if she was ever to get out of that house she would have to keep absolutely calm and give no hint of the fears that possessed her. Both the man and woman indulged in coarse remarks and jokes; they appeared to be on very friendly terms, and when the governess asked her when her charge was to appear, the man said:

"Oh, she'll be here quick enough, my dear; don't be in a hurry, you shall see her to-morrow morning."

"To-morrow morning!" said the girl. "I was told she was to be here this evening."

"Ah, but she has missed the train," said the man.

Then in a careless manner, as if to dispel their suspicion, the girl laughed and said: "Oh, well, I shall just go upstairs and write a letter."

She went to her room and hastily took an envelope out of her box, scribbled an address on it, stamped it, and putting on her hat, hurried downstairs again. In the hall she met the man, who offered to post her letter for her. She, however, declared that she would rather post it herself, as she

would take a walk round the square. The man informed her that he did not like the women of his house to do those things themselves.

It was growing dusk, and a horrible terror seized on the girl that he would refuse to let her out of the house; but she assured him she was accustomed, always before the evening meal, to take a quarter of an hour's exercise, and she would just post the letter and come back. Very reluctantly the man let her out. The girl went to the pillar-box, and then walked from there to the nearest police-station, where she explained that she had been obliged to leave her luggage in this house and desired to get home. She had, of course, absolutely no case to make out against the people, but the inspector to whom she spoke seemed in no way astonished at her plight. He asked the number of the house and consulted with some other policeman, and then turning up a book, said: "Ah, yes; I have been watching that place for some time." It seemed that the owner, a Belgian, bore a very bad character, and kept several women—or rather they kept him. But his affairs were managed in such a careful and cunning manner that it was months before any definite charge could be made against him.

The dangers that menace young girls in the great cities of Britain are increased a thousandfold by the unrestricted influx of aliens of evil character.

There are some localities in London which are almost entirely foreign; indeed, some places are so alien in their characteristics that one might fancy oneself in another country on entering them.

To-day, the Brick Lane end of Wentworth Street, Whitechapel, is one of the most un-English spots in the British Isles. On finding oneself there, it would require but little imagination to believe oneself in some foreign city; the

sights, sounds, and incidentally the smells, are so utterly different to those found in purely English slums. Whichever way one turns, one sees nothing but foreign figures and hears nothing but foreign tongues. Fur-capped Russians rub shoulders with whiskered Hollanders; Jews from the Levantine mingle with their brethren newly arrived from the snows of Siberia. Here stands a bearded Jew, with the face and figure of a Raphael cartoon. There is a woman selling lemons; her shawl enwraps the face of a Botticelli Madonna. Thick-lipped "Fagins" and grey-haired philosophers, pretty faces and hook-nosed ugliness; nowhere perhaps in the whole of England can one see so varied or so picturesque a crowd.

All these strange folks, be they ugly or beautiful, are bent on business. Every person one sees is either buying or selling. Rows of men stand hawking lemons; others sell onions, carrying them in long strings round their necks. Here comes a man calling out, in jargon, something that sounds like "sock o' lolly." He carries a pail; look in it and you will see green gherkins floating in a mysterious liquid. Over there stands a grey-whiskered man surrounded with barrels of salted Dutch herrings. He thrusts his dirty hands into one of the barrels and brings out a handful of the fish, which he displays on a board on the top of one of his barrels, the while extolling his wares in the language of David. Here and there, at the side of the kerb, are heaped piles of fusty old clothes, surrounded by stooping women and girls, turning over the bundles, seeking bargains.

Barrows full of old boots and shoes stand next to those, filled up with strange-looking bread stuffs, made in every kind of shape and colour conceivable. Gaudy splashes of colour are given to the market by barrows heaped with remnants of silk, which dark-eyed Jewesses examine with interest. Every



house in the street is a shop, and in every shop there is a Jew. The whole gamut of petty business seems to be carried on in this thoroughfare—from the retailing of cheap and shoddy jewellery to the vending of fried fish. In one shop is sold nothing but pickled cucumbers. There is a shop, little more than a hole in the wall, hung round with bullocks' offal, an awful-looking spot indeed. Some shops are stocked with curious-looking sacks of beans and peas; others retail scarcely anything but foreign-looking cheese.

The prevailing note of the place is frankly foreign. The very costers pushing their barrows full of indifferent fruit and fish call attention to their wares with foreign cries. Little children trip along singing nursery songs learnt in some far-off land. The walls of the houses are covered with Hebraic or Yiddish placards. The goods in the shops are marked with Hebrew prices. Here, fixed on the door-post of a closed butcher's shop, is an order in Yiddish, issued by the Board of Sechedin, the body that takes on the management of the slaughtering of animals according to the Talmudic law. Could you but read it, you would learn that this body warns the orthodox Jew from purchasing anything at the closed butcher's shop over the way, the butcher having been discovered in the act of selling meat that was not Kosher—that is, the flesh of animals that had not been slaughtered in accordance with Jewish rite and fashion.

No meal seems to be so popular with the foreign Jew as that consisting of fowl, or perhaps fried fresh-water fish. Every Thursday Middlesex Street, Wentworth Street, and Matilda Place are all devoted to the sale of these foods. The kerbs are lined with barrow-loads of fish and fowl. Jews who have been retailing old clothes or boots all the other days of the week blossom out at this time into poulterers and fishmongers. Probably there are more fowls sold in the

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East End of London on a Thursday afternoon than are sold in all the other parts of the metropolis, and fresh-water fish can hardly ever be obtained in London excepting at the fish markets or in these East End streets.

The original inhabitants of these places have all been crowded out. The foreigners have no use for them, except as sweated menials.

I have visited, in company with Consular officials and Salvation Army officers, some of the bad European slums, and there is little difficulty in recognising the influence that immigrants from these places have had on the submerged population of our great cities.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE SIMPLE LIFE, WITH VARIATIONS—HOW I LIVED ON SIXPENCE A DAY, AND EARNED IT

THE late famous Dr. Abernethy was reported to have given this prescription to a wealthy, gouty old patient who went to consult him: "Live on sixpence a day," said the famous professor, "and earn it," and for this he pocketed a fee of two guineas.

It might seem to the uninitiated that this advice was not worth the money, but Dr. Abernethy knew what he was talking about. He knew that the only hope for his overfed patient was work and exercise of some sort; but it is never necessary for an East End physician to give prescriptions of this kind to his patients.

The same sun shines upon the East and West alike. The same fogs descend upon rich and poor, and the Scriptures tell us that the same God made and created all men in His image, with souls of equal value in His sight.

In the light of modern civilisation, and with the experience of years of life in a Christian land, it might be forgiven to the sceptic that he doubts this assertion. It is very difficult to make a man who is sent to gaol for three years for stealing a sovereign to feed his starving family believe in the justice and equity of our laws, when he knows that a neighbour of his who has tortured his children and beaten his wife till he left

- her a hopeless cripple in the gutter receives a sentence of three months.

Such contrasts in the workings of the law, all those who follow the Police Court reports are constantly being made aware of.

Since the publication of Charles Wagner's beautiful book, "The Simple Life," there have been columns in the daily press, besides discussions and articles in the various magazines, on the subject. I have heard an American millionaire's views on the matter, and have also discussed it with an English lady whose income is £11,000 a year, and who spends about £20 a week, during the season, in the London beauty shops, under the conviction that because she pays her maid £2 less a year than is usual, and requires her cook to give an account of the dripping used in her kitchen, she is really leading an ideally simple life. The American friend who descanted on the matter wrote several articles in his own papers, of which he owns some twenty or thirty in the United States. He, like Mr. Rockefeller, insists on the advantages of thrift and economy among the people. He had been travelling through Europe on a motor car, being followed in another by a courier, valet, and an enormous quantity of luggage. On arriving in London, he installed himself in a magnificent suite of rooms at the Savoy. The simplicity of his life consisted in reducing the tips of the waiters, and in taking a breakfast of fruit from a Bond Street shop, instead of the ordinary heavy repast of meat usually provided.

His daughter is a friend of mine, and I stayed with them for a time as their guest, and accompanied them on a motor tour through Oxfordshire, Warwickshire, and some of the midland counties. The girl has an allowance of 10,000 dollars a year. I am bound to say that she did not get into debt, and I never heard a complaint from her as to the



shortness of her allowance, but these good people who advocate for the leading of a simple life gave me some pleasure by allowing me to tell them a little of the Simple Life, as understood by an Arab chief and an East End worker.

In Arabia, which is at the present day so unhappy as to have eluded all efforts at Christian civilisation, a chief will live contented and respected, a man among men, with his family, on £20 a year, and be passing rich at that.

Imagine a country where a man can live on a handful of dates and a drink of water, march thirty miles in the day, and fight half the night perhaps, without breaking down or running away.

Imagine the degraded state of women who travel in the caravan with their husbands till within an hour of the birth of their children. The expectant mother on the march drops out of the caravan with some female attendant, brings forth her child, bathes it in the sand, ties it on to her back, and marches cheerfully on to rejoin the caravan, which has travelled perhaps some twenty miles further on.

Could one conceive of the deplorable state of a country which has no factory laws, no poor laws, no labour members, and where there is not even a charity organisation?

In such a benighted land a man sits in his little hut with his family round him on the floor, eating his simple meal of unleavened bread and dates, or dried fish. The door is open, there passes a stranger who has, through some misfortune, neither home nor food. The man of the house sees him, calls to him, and says: "In the name of God enter and eat." Water is given him to wash his hands and feet, he joins the little family group and shares their homely fare, then thanking them in the name of God, he departs.

Imagine a tramp entertained at any dinner-table in a

Christian country. Such a thing would not be possible, because the tramp, himself a product of high modern civilisation, is so filthy and degraded an object that he is only fit for the society of swine.

Though I was not suffering from gout, I determined to try the Simple Life in London by living on the wages I earned with some of the outcast and poor of the city. In order to live on sixpence a day in London one has to be very far from simple. It is necessary to know where food can be bought cheapest, and where shelter may be obtained for next to nothing.

Mr. Charles Booth, in his wonderful study of the economic conditions of the people of London, states that 30 per cent. of the inhabitants of this great city are living in poverty, and that about one in every ten of the homeless poor seek relief.

An estimate, based upon the census of the poor in the East End of London, also compiled by Mr. Booth, gives the enormous percentage of one in every four of London's population to be either a pauper, homeless, starving, or very poor. To these people the Simple Life becomes a daily reality; in fact, it has been cultivated to such an extreme, that they are able to do without almost everything that other people would consider necessary to a civilised life.

Like the famous professor's horse, they have been successfully trained to do without almost everything, and it is only just at the moment when they are reduced to the one straw a day that they inconsiderately "go and die."

The difficulty of putting myself into a position where I would have no money of my own, and of being able to earn not more than sixpence a day, was very great; but I at length succeeded, with the help of a friend. To begin with, I had of course to dress for the part. I had to leave a

respectable neighbourhood and go forth looking as much like the people amongst whom I was going to live as possible.

After some rummaging in my "property box," we secured a really dreadful assortment: boots three sizes too large for me, down at the heel and tied with twine.

The matter of a skirt was harder to manage. I had put on a very old black one, and as I had used it for scrambling up and down hills, lying out in the woods, day after day, one summer in it, I thought it was sufficiently disreputable, but Mr. C., my friend, on whom I depended for my introduction into Poverty Kingdom, was dissatisfied.

"It isn't what you'd go to a duke's lunch party in, exactly; but there's something about it that won't do."

Then I remembered. The wretched thing had been built by a fashionable tailor, and had an unmistakable hang about it. Well, after some difficulty another skirt was found, a wibbly-wobbly thing that translated me into Poverty Kingdom at once. I borrowed a dirty sailor hat, tore the crown from the brim, thinking that it would make it shabby enough, but Mr. C. insisted on sitting on it, and then it really did look awful. I wore an ancient blouse my landlady had done her washing in, and throwing over me an old shawl, we started out, a very questionable-looking pair.

We left the house fairly early in the evening, and did not return until six in the morning.

Our way lay through mean streets in the Westminster borough. In these fœtid alleys there seems no idea of bed-time for the babies: there were scores of them playing in the gutters. Untidy women and filthy men herded at lowering doors. Here and there a public-house flung broad beams of light on to the squalid pavement. Strange that these places should be the only spots in poverty-haunted streets that do not bear an impress of poverty. It

is always a mystery to me why these miserable victims of drink and overcrowding do not rise in desperation and tear down the places that batten on their shrunken fortunes.

When, after some wandering, we got out of Westminster slums, we found ourselves by the Houses of Parliament. The streets were alight and pulsating with life.

We passed on to the Embankment, which might well be called the Waiting-Room of Travellers in Poverty Station. I was already tired—for we had covered about four miles, passing in and out of those horrid streets—so we sat down on one of the benches.

Presently a woman came and dropped down on the other end of the bench ; her clothes were fairly good, but her shoes were battered and she limped slightly. We watched her quietly for a while, then my companion began talking to her.

Conversation progressed very slowly. I have since learnt that these children of suffering speak but little. We were together some time, and bit by bit, in broken sentences, she told us some of the secrets of her life. I had determined that nothing should compel me to any emotionalism, but I grew almost hysterical as Mr. C. drew from this poor creature particulars of the existence which we were trying to qualify for.

She had been so tossed about and bruised herself, that one might have supposed that no touch of sympathy would have remained in her ; but she stooped over and looked at me from time to time, she was so sorry for my evident suffering.

“Never mind, dearie, it won’t seem so awful when you get more used to it. It is always dreadful at first. You’ll find you can’t sleep out more than two nights, but if you go into the casuals,” she said, “don’t you mind them there. They will bully you shockingly, but hard words don’t kill. I was so frightened the first night that I gave up the idea of going



in, and tramped the streets all night instead, the man was such a big bully. But you get used to it," she continued pathetically. "Just be deaf and dumb."

I was surprised at her speech, and found she was well educated.

"Is there no other place I could find shelter in?" I asked her.

"Not unless you've got money, dear. There are very few places of shelter for women in London."

I then remembered reading that in the year 1903 the average numbers admitted into casual wards in London on a Friday night were 778 men, 188 women, and 19 children. It would be interesting to know how much it cost to shelter this comparatively small number of London's outcasts.

"Do the shelters cost much?" I inquired of my companion,

"Mostly fourpence. There are one or two you can get into for twopence, and if you have nothing you just stay in the streets."

On another occasion I went into one of these shelters myself, but of them I shall write in another article, for to have even fourpence is to rise in the social scale, and means having work.

The three of us on the Embankment were beginning to doze when a policeman came by and ordered us to move on. We walked towards the city, and the woman accompanied us, with the apologetic air of an ownerless dog who will sneak after anyone for companionship.

We gathered from stray remarks that she had come from the country with a tiny capital to seek work in London. She never found it. The money was spent, her clothes wore out, and she found herself one of the many for whom the world had no place. She noticed that I was crying, and thinking it was my own misfortune that troubled me, she pressed a halfpenny into my hand.

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"You can't buy anything for a ha'penny till morning," she said. "The coffee is a penny a cup at night, but at five o'clock you can get a cup for a ha'penny; it is dreadful to be hungry till you're used to it." I walked swiftly away, and she said to Mr. C.: "Don't be hard on her, she's such a little thing."

Can you imagine the heavenly charity of the poor creature; she had eaten nothing that livelong day, but she gave me her last halfpenny.

I never understood charity till I lived with the poor. The grand dames of London might do worse than study this grace with those who go hungry that some worse fated creature may be fed.

We heard the Westminster clock chime two, and set our faces towards the Bridge. Mr. C. asked me if I would mind waiting there for a few minutes while he went to look for a coffee-stall.

It was very quiet, and I stood under the shelter of the parapet. A little further down a woman was leaning over, looking into the water. Something in her attitude arrested my attention, and I walked on till I was within a few feet of her, and there I waited. No sound came up except the swirling of the water by the bridge piers, and I heard her say softly: "Oh, my God! my God!" She dropped her head in her hands, and I knew she was crying. I went up very softly and put my hand on her. She threw me off roughly.

"What do you want? Who are you?" I saw by her face she was quite young.

"I am just a girl like you," I said. "Won't you tell what is the matter; it is so dreadful to be alone?" Her pity was instantly reached.

"Poor little thing!" she said gently; "have you come—to end it all?" pointing to the water below.

“ Oh, but that would be such a poor end,” I said.

We talked for a little while : the girl said she was a colonel's daughter. Unsuccessful as a governess, she had tried various other callings with moderate success till a severe illness overtook her, and she went into hospital, only to come out to find starvation or the streets waiting for her. She could face neither prospect, and stood on the bridge waiting for an opportunity to pass into a world which could not be more cruel. She jumped eagerly at the chance of going to America as a £2 steerage passenger.

I must say in reference to this story that I satisfied myself of the truth of the girl's statements, and discovered that she was very capable of domestic service. No one would recommend her in England, and she was incapable of further effort in seeking work. Introductions were secured for her to the right sort of friends in America. Left on the bridge, she would have added one to the hideous roll of suicides in 1904. The number in 1901 was 3,057.

I was terribly tired when my companion returned, and it was with very lagging feet that we wandered on towards Blackfriars. We walked up Thames Street towards Billingsgate Market. Who would know these long, soundless streets, with dark, gaping alleys here and there, for those same busy highways we are accustomed to in London. When we reached Billingsgate we felt we were in a city of the dead—here and there a predatory cat or a skulking dog slipped past, or a sleepy policeman yawned loudly as he strolled by. It was too early for the market, so we went on to Smithfield. Sleepy butchers were dragging out sacks and carcasses from high-piled carts; here and there a fat cat rubbed herself against the benches.

It was not a very enlivening scene, so we sought a coffee-stall, and finding none, went into Lockhart's; the butchers'

boys and carters were drinking coffee at little tables, but they refused to serve us. "No females in here," said the man, looking suspiciously at me. I was ready to cry with disappointment, I wanted some coffee so much. However, presently we found a place where the despised sex might slip in unostentatiously, swallow some food, and depart. We were served with two hot cups of coffee and an enormous hunk of cake each for fourpence.

Somewhat refreshed, we travelled back to Fleet Street.

A strange white shimmer was on the streets. The weirdness of the empty Strand has a marvellous fascination, and we had a photograph taken of it. The picture was taken at a quarter to four one morning. Half an hour later this particular part of the Strand was blocked with market carts overflowing from Covent Garden—a sight never seen during the day.

We wandered about for a while, and presently out of the printing-offices printers and pressmen issued. Long strings of red carts drew up outside the publishing buildings, to distribute the papers that had been printed while part, at least, of London slept. From here we dragged our weary limbs to Covent Garden. By this time we had both fallen into the unmistakable slouch of the drag-footed stray. My feet were so badly blistered that I could hardly move. Our friend on the Embankment had told us that we could probably get a job at shelling peas at Covent Garden, or bottling fruit at one of the factories. I "went for" the peas. The "Garden" was absolutely choked with market carts; we were obliged to crawl under the very wheels, and in and out of horses' legs to get into the market. I discovered here a new calling for women—that of cart-minding. We met a bright girl, with a saucy face and impertinent tongue, who answered to the name of Meg. She took



charge of dozens of the market carts. Every owner was known to her by name, and every horse too. She told us she was paid twopence for every cart she took in charge. I do not, however, feel justified in recommending the profession, for it needs considerable training. It would be necessary to be prepared for physical encounters with thieving boys, and all-night duty.

Early as we were at the pea-shed, some hundred wretched creatures were already busy shelling peas with incredible speed. Only women are employed at this work. They sit on upturned baskets or stools in rows down the length of the shed. A man at one end gave each woman an apron or skirt full of peas. These she shelled into a flat tin pan and brought back to be measured. The "boss" poured the peas into a tin quart measure and gave the woman a metal disc for each quart done. These were exchanged later for threepence each. I was so worn out and exhausted that I only managed to earn twopence. Then Mr. C. came and took me away. I had endured all that was possible for that one night. And following on that experience, I tasted the bitter cup of charity in a casual ward, an experience I have described in another chapter.

My second essay at earning a living by pea-shelling was more successful; this time I entered a factory where fruit and vegetables are preserved for table use and export trade. I earned from fourpence to sixpence a day, and managed my exchequer with the skill of a professional financier, for I continued to balance my expenditure exactly with my income.

In the morning I spent a halfpenny on a mug of cocoa and a halfpenny on a bun at Lockhart's.

In the day I bought two bananas for a penny; this made my midday meal. Thus I had twopence left to pay for a box at the Salvation Army Shelter, but I had nothing for an

evening meal unless I was able to earn an extra penny or two. For me, of course, though this was bad enough at the time, it was no lifelong tragedy, but there are literally hundreds of creatures for whom this state of semi-starvation is a normal condition. Could any well-fed, comfortably-housed person imagine what suffering is endured by those who *are always hungry*? Yet hunger is not the worst evil those poor creatures have to endure. One of the bitterest parts of a respectable woman's sufferings is the impossibility of keeping clean when driven from home.

These wanderers make deliberate and futile efforts after cleanliness. I have seen them secretly trying to wash and wring out a garment in a Park pool, or Trafalgar Square fountains; but this is strictly forbidden, and there is danger of their being caught by the police while so engaged.

The suffering caused by dirt is, to many of these women, utterly intolerable. One woman told me she didn't mind being hungry so much as being dirty. She said if she didn't get something in a day or two she would throw herself into the Thames. "It'll wash my soul and body too," she said despairingly.

The Salvation Army Shelters are excellent, but they cost from twopence to fourpence, and above all, are so crowded, it is quite impossible for women to find shelter there always. I have been in one of these Shelters myself, and know they are quite good.

Let anyone who thinks it fun to be poor and homeless try the hospitality of the streets for even one night. The humour of the situation palls after the first two hours.

There is a crying need in this wealthy city for decent shelters for women. I counted during one of my weary nights in London thirty-three women in a small area who, to all appearances, seemed quiet and respectable, though

homeless. I spoke to twenty of them. Out of the number, eleven offered to "share" a cup of coffee or a bit of bread with me, or tried to leave a penny with me. I confess I cried a good deal, and these dear children of sorrow thought my trouble was greater than theirs. They are indeed homeless amid a thousand homes.

One experience that broke me down utterly was outside a casual ward.

We had been waiting a couple of hours to see the people come out. A respectable but starved-looking working man came out from the men's side. We talked with him for some time. He was a mechanic from Chatham, come with his wife to find work in London. They were obliged at last to seek refuge in the casual ward, and he waited for his wife to come out. They had not a penny. We gave him sixpence, and he said: "Thank God, it'll get a meal for the missus; she's the best soul alive." When the gates opened and the motley crew of women struggled out, he went forward to meet his wife. She was not there. Presently he was told she had been sent out the day before, and so had wandered out into the streets alone. The poor fellow put his hand to his head. "My God, she'll die alone in London," and he fainted from pure agony of mind. Fleeing from this heart-rending sight, I came on a group of little children in an empty packing-case near the Opera House in Drury Lane. These three London sparrows were feeding themselves on little bullet-like green gooseberries they had picked up under the carts in Covent Garden. Green gooseberries form an ideal food to raise the sons of the Empire on!

With such an excellent food supply one still wonders how it was that in 1903, 2,452 children *under* twelve years of age and 9,004 between that age and sixteen were convicted of indictable offences,

From very close observation of their work I feel sure that Dr. Barnardo or the Salvation Army, between them, could rescue and provide for all these unhappy victims of Fate, who now become such heavy charges on the State.

I hold no brief for either of these magnificent organisations, I only speak from what I have seen. The splendid workability of their methods, and the quickness with which they act, are tremendously in their favour. But they have to beg and plead for money. It seems a curious policy to prefer to pay heavy rates for prisons and workhouses when money spent on *curative* and *preventive* measures would be far less expensive and far more effectual.

Sometimes it is an affliction to have a sense of humour; one sees things in lights that more sober mortals are utterly unable to see. In the face of the awful conditions of our towns and streets in Britain it seems odd that such anxiety should be displayed about the "souls of the heathen," who, as far as my personal knowledge of them goes, compare favourably with the "heathen at home." I thought of the sights and sounds I had seen and heard in London slums when attending a meeting where the awful sins of heathenism were being talked about. It seemed to me funny that souls ten thousand miles off should be accounted so much more precious than those in the London streets. Why, for instance, is it a more heinous crime for a Hindoo widow to be badly treated than for an English girl to be without shelter in London streets, starving and cold? It will not avail to say they need not starve if they do not wish to.

No one who has suffered hunger and cold is such a fool as to suppose any creature would choose to endure either. I have no Utopian scheme to suggest. But these homeless women lie heavy on my heart, and it is, I think, possible to secure them rest and shelter at small cost,



I am assured by several experts on matters of social service that it would be quite possible to provide a shelter capable of accommodating 1,000 women nightly for £20,000. This place would have lavatories and wash-tubs underground, and a small room for a caretaker.

It might be warmed with hot-water pipes. There need be no beds, only comfortable seats, and the place could be flushed every morning. Here women could rest in a clean, warm place. Cheap food might be provided at a rough bar at cost price if advisable.

Such a shelter would be a God-send to the poor harried children of the night.

## CHAPTER XIV

### ON OUTPOST DUTY

My experience in the Salvation Army Shelters, and the help and sympathy extended by Salvationists to those in dire need, made me eager to examine for myself the effect of their work on the evil characters in really bad neighbourhoods, so when the opportunity presented itself I seized it. Now I know how it is that we sleep secure in our comfortable beds, when thousands are homeless, and how it is that despair and passion do not urge desperate, starving creatures to riot and murder. It is because, unknown to the careless world, numbers of God's patient, loving servants devote their lives to caring for these dread people. Believe me, it is not the law and the police who effectually keep down awful demonstrations of crime—it is the Divine labour and love of all those men and women who, being lost to the world, ceaselessly toil and suffer for humanity.

I think it was the bonny face peeping out from under the hideous poke bonnet of blue adorned with the red badge of the Salvation Army, that won me to an interest in the peculiar work the owner was engaged in. She was standing where rushing streams of London traffic made crossing impossible, and we waited on an island, clinging to a lamp-post to keep our balance, for the refugees were crowded thick. She raised her head, and a sudden smile illuminated her

freckled face. My heart went out to her instantly. She looked so bright and wholesome—and as the girls say down Hoxton way—"we spoke."

She told me as we rollicked citywards on the top of a bumpy 'bus, that she had been into the country on "exchange duty," another Sister taking her place for three weeks on "outpost duty." She had enjoyed her holiday, if holiday it might be called, considering that she was at work the whole time, but it was the change into the pure air, and a sight of the trees and grass she had revelled in, and now she returned to the great city, fresh as a country flower, and as good to meet. She laughed merrily when I inquired innocently as to the meaning of "outpost duty," "Slum Sister," and other unfamiliar expressions she used, and said: "Why, Sister, I guess you'd better come along with me to my room, and you'll find out for yourself what it all means." I was not able just then to accompany her, but before we reached Liverpool Street she had given me her address, and I had promised to meet her some day at a place named by her not far from where her work lay. "As yet," she said, "we have not gone to live exactly at the worst spot, but Lieutenant Francis and I mean to get there yet."

Some months after this meeting, when my heart was sore with much contact with poverty and misery, and I was burning, not only to touch "the heart of things," but to see some way out of the awful slough of crime and misery for the miserable creatures I had been travelling among, I thought, in my indignation and despair, of Captain Molly, and wrote, claiming her promise to show me "light in dark places." After the delay of a few days I received her answer, asking me to meet her at Barracks No. ——. I went.

"Well, I'm just as glad as can be to see you. I thought you had forgotten," she said; "but are you sure, my dear,

you realise what you are undertaking? It isn't a pleasant place for strangers, where I live."

"I am not afraid," I said; "if you can live there, I can visit there."

"It isn't quite the same thing," she said. "Besides, you see, my uniform's a protection."

"If I come with you I shall wear a uniform also, if you will let me."

She looked dubious. "Sit down," she said, "and we'll talk and pray over it."

We were in a little bare room. A picture of the Divine Master praying in the Garden hung on the whitewashed wall. In the picture the face was lifted to heaven, and the yearning look in the eyes moved one to pity for a love that could so hunger for the outcast and the needy. Captain Molly saw me look at the picture.

"Can you understand it?" she said.

"I think so," I answered quietly. "It seems so sorrowful that so many human creatures should be wasted."

She came and put her hand on my shoulder. "Come, if you feel like that."

#### THE WORST STREET IN LONDON

"I don't know," said Captain Molly, as we walked towards her "post" some days afterwards, both of us wearing the sombre dress of the "Soldiers of Salvation," "that it really is the worst street in London; but about here, the police and others say it is, and I don't think it would be easy to beat it anywhere."

We were threading our way through crowds, in a narrow street flanked by barrows and coster-stalls. I noticed the folk made way for us as we went, and Captain Molly acknowledged all courtesies with a word or smile. And by-and-by



we came to a dingy court which seemed a veritable plague-spot—the haunt, as I afterwards learnt, of thieves and bad characters. And this was Green Arbour Court. Ye Shades! what a place!

“And why,” I asked my companion, “do they call it Green Arbour Court?”

She smiled a trifle sadly.

“The authority who christened it must have been an ironical wag and named it for its oppositeness to its title—or maybe,” she said slowly, “once it was green and good, even here.”

One might imagine the place, from its name, a spot redolent of flowers and melodious with song, instead of being, as it is, a group of dirty, dark, insanitary hovels, where the death-rate is four times as high as any street in its immediate neighbourhood. A slum shunned by all but the very lowest; a modern Alsatia; a close borough of blackguardism, visited by the police only at rare intervals, and then only in couples. Practically ignored by the sanitary authorities, excepting on the occasion when the fever ambulance takes away one of its inhabitants, a victim, perhaps, to diphtheria or some other infectious horror, born in the vile miasma arising from its filth and uncleanness.

For very obvious reasons, it is impossible for me to do more than barely indicate the exact locality of this wretched place.

It is situated in the east of London, and its only entrance leads from a well-known thoroughfare.

It was on a humid autumn evening that I first entered this narrow, paved court. It seemed as if I had entered an oven. The sun had beaten on the houses all day, and owing to the lack of ventilation the small rooms had become absolutely unbearable to the inhabitants. The heat had driven nearly

every inmate of the houses out of doors. Those who were not in the public-house that stood on one side of the entrance to the court were sitting on the doorsteps or paving in front of their houses. Quarrelsome, hot, dirty, and semi-naked children were crawling about or sitting on the hard stones, and every corner seemed alive—so much so that I feared I would have to step on someone if I wished to pass up the court at all. Little wonder that the place echoed with bad language and words not of the gentlest.

“Do you really live here?” I asked of Captain Molly.

“Surely,” she said, and I followed her obediently up the rickety stairway of a tenement house. At the third storey we halted on the tiny landing, and I noticed it was the only clean spot we had passed since entering the court. Captain Molly took out a key from her pocket, and we entered her “station.”

She had two rooms opening into each other. The matchboarding between them was painted a pretty green, and hung with lovely prints in reed frames; I noticed they were fixed on with brass nails.

“My sister, Mrs. —, gave those to me,” said Captain Molly, mentioning a name well known in London society.

There was no covering on the floor save a small mat, and it was enamelled a pretty dark brown; the chairs were enamelled in green to match the partition, and the table was brown like the floor. There was a big, rough, green jar of growing ferns in the window, and a blackbird in a cage hung there also. We went into the little bedroom. It was painted in dark blue, and a narrow truckle bed and one small trunk were the chief bits of furniture. Beside a tall, rush-bottomed chair was a tiny slip of carpet. A little table held a few books, and on the wall, above a small shelf, hung a six-inch looking-glass. “Just to show if the helmet’s on straight,” laughed Captain Molly.

"I pay six shillings a week for this place," said Captain Molly, "and am better provided with room than any of my neighbours."

The remembrance of my first night in that place will stay with me always. We went out to a meeting that evening, and returned eager to rest, but all through the night it was a pandemonium. There were horrid shouts and oaths, and sometimes a woman's scream and the cry of a terrified child broke through the babel of noise. About three o'clock a knock came on our door. Captain Molly got up. A man stood outside, haggard and awful-looking. "My gal's dying out there," he said. On the steps of one of the houses, propped against the wall, sat a wasted girl panting for breath. At Captain Molly's command, the man carried her up to our room. We laid a blanket on the floor and bathed her face with cold water. It was all marred and disfigured with marks of many battles. Once she spoke in broken gasps: "Git 'old o' Tom; 'e ain't a bad lot." The man heard and bent down. The girl was dead. Remembering her words, "Tom" let Captain get hold of him, and became a valued helper and guide.

For a time I hung on to Captain Molly's skirts, till gradually I grew more familiar with the place, and made acquaintance with some of our neighbours.

One of the first persons I came to know in the house was a woman, who, with several other persons and a number of children, occupied a room on the next landing to ours. One night I had stumbled over her in the dark, when she was lying in a drunken sleep on the stairs near our room. At first I thought she was ill, and fetched a light to see how I could help her. But I soon discovered that she was insensibly drunk, and also that she had received a fall, and had badly cut her forehead. There was quite a pool of blood

where she lay. Making a bandage by tearing up one of our towels, I first bathed and then bound up the wound; then getting assistance, I had her taken to her room. Through this act of common duty, an acquaintanceship sprang up between us, from which I gathered a great deal of knowledge. From her I learned much of the habits of our neighbours. Of course many things that she told me would be utterly impossible to relate, and can only here be hinted at. From her I learned that most of the men in the house were "hocks" or "dead bents," as she called common thieves. Nearly all of them had at some period of their lives "done time"—that is, been in prison. Several had been "bashed"; or, in other words, flogged in prison for the crime of "robbery with violence."

Crimes of the very worst description were openly and sympathetically discussed, and one cannot help wondering why the authorities allow such a hot-bed of sin to exist. That they know of its existence the periodical visits of the police testify, but I suppose even thieves must live somewhere, and perhaps it is thought best that they should congregate in a colony where they can be, as it were, under the eye of the police, who often visited this locality at night, in order to find, if possible, some notorious criminal. This the people themselves call "turning them over."

Not an individual in the place appeared to earn an honest livelihood. Boys started off in the morning in gangs, like wolves in search of prey. Men went into the country to "do jobs," which did not mean, as one might be led to believe, the carrying out of some respectable employment, but was the term applied to the committing of some well-planned crime, generally directed by one of the "heads," as these master-criminals are called. Young and old, feeble and strong, all were engaged in crime. The tiniest boys and



girls crawled into shops "after the box," as they called stealing tills, a kind of robbery inflicted on the small shopkeepers in the neighbourhood, and causing them much annoyance. The youths and young women infested the dark thoroughfares on the look-out for helpless women or drunken "mugs," as they called their victims, in order to beat and rob them, while the greybeards of this banditti planned burglaries and crimes of a more daring or dastardly nature. ✓

It was in this neighbourhood that I first came into actual contact with people who, at least one to another, openly admitted that they were thieves and vagabonds, though later, in company with a friend, I made a closer study of the criminal class. There criminal exploits and nefarious projects were discussed as calmly and quietly as my more respectable friends discuss their daily business. As may be imagined, it required a good deal of patience, and something of tact, to gain the confidence of these people, and Captain Molly's friendship for me was a guarantee of my faith. Then, too, little acts of common charity—assistance in case of accident, advice in illness—all these things helped towards establishing a friendly feeling.

Honour amongst thieves obtains to a much greater extent than one would suppose. Low as these people are, there is a viler being—the police-paid spy—often a thief himself, who lives with, and on, his companions in crime, and then betrays them. These contemptible "mouchards" are known as "copper's narks." They are not officially recognised, of course, but they are great factors in the discovery of crime and criminals, and from the point of view of law and order, must be considered useful. But the arm of the law is not long enough to reach these people and drag them into respectability, nor is it strong enough to sweep them and their

rat-holes away, and force them to decent living. It is the "soldiers" on outpost duty — the Slum Sisters — who here are stronger than the law, and are instrumental in winning many a young life from criminality.

I discovered, while here, that vile and cruel as many of these people are, there are some sparks of humanity in most of them, and I cannot believe that they are utterly and wholly lost. I truly believe that if some method could be found by which they could be approached in a common-sense and kindly fashion, that the children, at least, could be educated out of their criminal ways. It is not enough that here and there a Slum Sister carries the torch of civilisation and Christianity among them. For their own protection, all decent citizens should co-operate to demand good housing and sanitary laws and compulsory work for able-bodied men at a fair living wage. This could be done by forming small committees who could occupy rooms in the very centres of these hot-beds of crime. Much good and useful work could be done from these centres : advice in time of need, medical and surgical assistance, organised charity, enforcement of the Public Health Acts, and a hundred-and-one other useful duties, which would be sure to have a good effect on the lives of the people watched over.

I know that there are many missions doing good and useful work besides the Salvation Army, but I am afraid that most of the effort is spent upon that well-cared-for class, "the deserving poor." I enter a plea also for the undeserving criminal; and the class of work should be extended that is done by the Slum Sisters of the Salvation Army in such places as I have described.

The Public Health (London) Act (54 and 55 Vict., c. 76) inflicts penalties in respect of having premises in a state dangerous to health, also in the matter of overcrowding.

But who is there to enforce this law? In Green Arbour Court no sanitary inspector ever came. The houses were almost all owned by one man—a Jew—and they were all “rack-rented.” In the one next to ours thirty people lived, and the aggregate rent for the house amounted to about £140. Most of the houses had no street doors, and the stairs were broken and unsafe, and many a piece of rope took the place of banisters and hand-rails.

How often in the gathering dark Captain Molly would go down to the end of the court opposite the “pub,” and there stand with her face upraised and sing holy words that seemed to purify the tainted air. Once a girl came by, and acting on some strange, vile impulse, threw a rotten orange at the “Captain.” It struck her full in the chest and spattered over her gown. She turned to the girl with “You poor child!”

The creature yelled out “God blarst yer!” and rushed laughing down the street. The meeting went on. Captain Molly spoke wonderful words to the strange, half-human creatures round her. That night about twelve o’clock there was a knocking at the door. Captain Molly opened the door, and brought in the girl who had thrown the orange. She was covered with blood and dirt, and trembling and sobbing. After a while we learnt her trouble. Her “bloke” had “bashed” her for being unsuccessful in picking pockets at the train terminus, and as he had administered his chastisement in public, the police had captured him and walked him off for trial. He had split open one policeman’s head, so his sentence was sure to be a severe one. Poor “Red Meg,” as the girl was called, was in great distress. In her sore and forlorn condition she came to Captain Molly. The last I heard of her was that she was serving in a country shop (boots and shoes), and was much valued by her employers. She was waiting and praying for a “change of heart for her bloke,”

and divided her spare pence between the Salvation Army Prison Mission and a little hoard she was gathering to make a home when the "bloke" was released. Captain Molly will take care he is met at the prison gate and helped to a new life if he so wishes.

In many of the noisome places of our great cities, among the slum-dwellers, there settle these devoted "Slum Sisters," living generally two together. We may never read the record of their golden deeds, but their names must be inscribed in letters of gold in God's Book of Life, for they have added many souls to His Kingdom.



## CHAPTER XV

### HOW WE ENCOURAGE OUR WORKING POPULATION—DUST-HEAPS AS “ELIGIBLE” BUILDING SITES—HANDICAPS ON BRITISH TRADE

It was after many evil experiences among the “homes” of the poor that I turned with relief to a neighbourhood where I expected to find a fair ideal of working-class homes, and I give my account of the place as I found it.

I remember once at a *matinée* hearing the late Dan Leno descant upon the text, “Why pay rent?” The little jester gave very excellent reasons for doing so, the chief one being that you paid rent because you could not help it. According to the advertisements, however, which one sees in the daily papers, one might purchase an “eligible” house in an “eligible” locality for next to nothing, and furnish it on the hire-purchase system, which, according to the ingenious advertisements, is the cheapest and most convenient form of purchase. These advertisements always have a certain attraction for me. I suppose deep in every human heart lies the desire to possess, and the possession of a house and land appears one of the most attractive assets.

I have followed, for many years now, the plans of the London County Council for the improvement or betterment of London, and it is because of the interest I take in the welfare of the working classes that I went for a time to reside among them in a locality which was advertised as containing

“desirable houses” for working people. A friend of mine, whose knowledge of the world is somewhat extensive, said to me, in reference to this often-expressed desire of mine to possess a really nice and comfortable house: “There are three classes of people whom you must never have any dealings with unless you have an ardent desire to be cheated. These three classes are—builders, house-agents, and outside brokers or tipsters. There has never been known,” he said, “an honest man in any of these professions.” Without discussing the truth or falseness of this assertion, I will tell the story of the workman’s “desirable house” where I lived for some little time. If my description of this place brings a contradiction from any member of the London County Council or any person engaged in the building trade, I shall be charmed to conduct him personally to the place described.

Holyhedge Street is the somewhat rural name of a mean little thoroughfare in one of the new districts which have sprung up with fungus-like rapidity on the outskirts of South London. This street is the most perfect example I know of what a street ought *not* to be. In the first place, the site of it is a disused dust-heap—the dumping-ground for years of the contents of the dust-holes and offal-pits of an enormous parish. After its capacity as a dumping-ground was exhausted, and before the advent of the huge board which proclaimed it to be “eligible” for the erection of small villas, this place was practically a plague spot. Huge mounds of festering refuse, and pools of stagnant water, occupied the position where now “desirable” villas stand. They have been erected by a speculative builder who has bought the land, and either lets or sells these houses one by one as he puts them up. Of course he would never dream of occupying one of them himself. He is a gentleman who has studied sanitation and

hygiene, I suppose, and all the kindred subjects which go to make up the education of a professional builder. Therefore, when he erected these jerry-built places, he knew what he was doing. As residences suitable for decent, honest human beings I know of no modern houses more "undesirable." The workmen, in digging out the trenches for the flimsy foundations these houses stand upon, had often to suspend their work owing to the stench which arose when the outer crust of these refuse mounds was broken or disturbed. Each spade thrust into this spot brought up old boots, tin cans, decaying bones, rotten rags, and other abominations. Not only were these houses built upon this reeking soil, but for the sake of the ashes it contained, it was sifted and made into mortar and plaster. The walls were built and the interior of the houses daubed with the germ-impregnated mud. The bricks which were used in the construction of these villas came chiefly from the condemned areas of the London County Council. When the houses in these districts are pulled down, the old microbe-laden bricks are carted away to some "desirable" site in some newly-formed district, and are there built into the walls of the new houses. In some cases whole streets are built of these materials.

It was in a house built in just this manner, in one of these streets, that I elected to take up my residence and live as nearly as possible the life of the people who rush to this neighbourhood in the vain hope of securing comfortable homes. These people rent and occupy the houses, in some cases, before they are finished, and while the walls are actually wet with moisture exuding from the mortar and plaster. The sanitary authorities do not permit a house to be occupied until the drains are inspected and a proper supply of water is laid on. But to these excellent regulations might be added a rule against the occupying of newly-built houses before they are

dry. As it is, thoughtless and ignorant people rent these places, and old folks and children are put to sleep in damp and badly-ventilated rooms. After a few nights in such pestilent holes, they wake with disease, which hastens on that sleep from which there is no waking. The fact that the doctor's brougham and the ambulance of the Asylum's Board were constantly in the street where I lived, points only too plainly to the dangers lurking in houses built upon muck-heaps, and occupied before they are dry.

My neighbours, as I got to know them, with but few exceptions were of that quickly disappearing type — honest working folks, whose wages ranged from eighteen shillings to £2 a week. Many of these people worked in the neighbourhood; others went regularly to the city by workmen's trains or trams. Some of them were frugal and sober, others drank and were rather thriftless, though none of them belonged to the hopelessly improvident class. I found, after living among these people and visiting them pretty frequently, that a good indication of the habits and industry of the inhabitants of the houses could be gathered from the way in which the tiny front gardens and the front windows were kept. In some cases the little slips of ground before the villas were gay with bright flowers, and perhaps a miniature lawn. In the evenings the owners might be seen busily watering the plants, mowing the lawn with a six-inch machine, and otherwise occupying themselves in beautifying and improving their gardens. Others of the front yards, however, became the play-grounds for the stray dogs of the street, or the receptacles of its rubbish. I found it was not always the gardens of the better paid inhabitants that looked the best. The house belonging to the postman, who perhaps had the most responsible position, and was probably the worst paid of all my neighbours, was always the brightest and neatest in the street.



As it was with the gardens, so with the windows. In some were displayed hideous vases of wax fruit and flowers under glass shades, which stood upon the Family Bible, which, I regret to say, was seldom used except as a stand—or a brass-bound album of family photographs. Other windows showed not a little taste in the selection of their neat curtains and the colour and drapery of their blinds. As the eyes are said to be the windows of the soul, so the windows of the working people's cottages often proclaim the character of the inhabitants. It is a curious thing that in America, which we fondly regard as a crude and inartistic country, the dwellings of the working classes are often extremely beautiful, and are generally tastefully decorated. I was much struck, during the many visits I paid to the homes of mechanics and other workmen in the United States, to notice that the papering of their walls was almost always carried out in self-coloured papers of really artistic shades, while their doors, instead of being painted, were beautifully polished. I found that the workmen themselves were often responsible for these pleasant attributes of the houses. In Hollyhedge Street I went to live with a young couple who had been married but a short time, and I was the lodger they took in to make ends meet. My host was a journeyman carpenter and joiner; he was, I think, about twenty-five years of age, and his wife, a comely little woman, could not have been more than about nineteen. They had, like many of their class, married without saving or having a home prepared. "We just married and chanced it," my landlady told me. Their first home was one furnished room, for which they had paid seven shillings a week. The man was a hard-working young fellow, and, I believe, a good craftsman, who at the time of his marriage was in fairly regular work; in fact, he was engaged in work upon the houses in the street in which we lived. The wife had been employed in a local

florist's shop : she possessed some instincts of taste and refinement. The husband was intelligent and very much interested in politics, and was a member of a Trades Union. I mention these facts as an indication of the character of the people, for I want to show that it was not for want of good behaviour, or through culpable neglect, that they suffered the pitiable misfortunes which later befel them.

They had been married but a few weeks when they decided to take one of the houses in this street, and furnish three rooms upon the hire-purchase system. The owner of the house at that time was a speculative builder, and he readily accepted this workman, who bore a good character, as a tenant. He knew also, that having the house occupied would make it easier to mortgage it or sell it to some house investor.

The rent of the villa was thirteen and sixpence a week ; its accommodation consisted of six small rooms, one of which was fitted as a kitchen. The thirteen and sixpence was about one-third of the young man's wages, but he hoped to let off three of his rooms for seven shillings, thus leaving himself with a rental of six and sixpence per week. With this end in view he took the house, and I became the tenant. To furnish his three rooms he had gone to one of those firms who advertise in the daily papers their willingness to supply furniture upon what they are pleased to term the "easy payment" or hire-purchase system. "You get married, and we will do the rest," is a famous formula of this sort of advertisement. The young couple, after anxious comparison of different advertisements, at last made up their minds, and visited the shop of a firm who are, if one may believe their advertisements, pure philanthropists, with an ardent desire to increase the marriage rate and help penniless lovers to tide safely over the hidden rocks and snags of a moneyless marriage. At the first interview my friends were presented with a form to fill

up, which consisted of intimate questions which would convey as much, if not more private information than that required by the Charity Organisation Society from a would-be recipient of its bounty. After much perturbation, the form was duly filled in and sent off to the furnishing firm, who were good enough to approve of and accept the applicants, and forthwith acquainted them with the fact. On the next visit to the shop these young people were asked to sign an agreement wherein they promised to pay immediately £2 10s., and a further sum of £1 a month until the sum of £25 was paid, this being the price of certain articles of furniture which, according to this agreement, were to remain the property of the vendors until the amount of £25 had been paid in full. The agreement having been signed, the purchasers proceeded to select furniture from the stock in the shop. They finally got a complete collection of as shoddy and flimsy a set of goods as was ever turned out of an alien's sweating shop in the East End. The furniture was sent to their home, and for a time at least, the varnish and paint made the goods, though very rickety, look bright and clean, and the heart of the neat little housewife was filled with pride in her new possessions. The young couple were delighted to have at last a home of their own. Shortly, the veneer on the top of the sideboard rose in a blister, and the green wood that had been used in the chest of drawers warped and twisted to such an extent, that the drawers became very difficult to open, and the handles were dragged out in trying to accomplish this feat. Then again, the chairs did not long continue to appear the safest of receptacles for the human body. They looked quite nice as they stood against the wall, but creaked ominously when sat upon. I made a mental valuation of the furniture, and came to the conclusion that £7 would have been a liberal sum to pay for it. Of course

I did not live in this house for the whole period during which the occupants paid this hire-purchase money, but I visited the people later in another house, and heard from them the story of their undoing.

For ten months the regular payment of £1 each month was promptly made. Then the young people were visited by a representative from the furnishing firm. This gentleman was most affable and obliging, and succeeded in persuading these dupes to buy a small cottage piano, for which they entered into a new contract to pay £24, together with the balance still due on the original agreement. They were now indebted to the vendors for the sum of £36. Six more monthly payments were made, then a calamity overtook them. The builder who employed the young man sold his business, and this man, together with several of the other workmen, found themselves out of work. A long period of trouble and unemployment loomed ahead. It was winter, and week after week went by, and miles of London streets were traversed, but trade was bad, and no work was to be found. The little sum of money that had been saved vanished rapidly, until the poor young couple were absolutely penniless. Then came the baby. Every farthing that could be borrowed or raised on their small personal treasures was swallowed up in this new expense. The man redoubled his search for employment. Every morning he rose at five, caught the first workmen's train to the city, and tramped the streets till the evening. One day he had gone off as usual upon his hopeless quest, when a van drove up to his house. From it four men descended. They claimed admittance, and the leader of the party read to the frightened woman a document which stated that as three months' instalment of the furniture hire was due, the firm had decided to cancel the agreement. They promptly collected all the furniture and departed with it. When the



husband returned, he found an empty house. So completely had the work been done, that the man and his wife and their young baby had to sleep upon the floor of their bedroom. Every stick of the flimsy, shoddy rubbish, for the hire of which they had paid something over £20, was taken away by the men, who paid no heed to the distracted pleadings of the woman.

Only a few months ago, a case of almost identically the same description was tried in the public courts. In this instance, however, the clients were not defenceless and ignorant working people, and the firm found themselves obliged to pay a large sum to the woman they had attempted to rob.

The lives of the people in Hollyhedge Street were cursed by many evils, which resulted not only from the insanitary spot upon which their dwellings were built—while I was in Hollyhedge Street, three of the babies born there died—but from those pests of poorer neighbourhoods who are known as tally-men. As soon as houses in the street were occupied there swept down upon us a flock of human vultures eager to obtain as much money as they could possibly screw out of the people. These tally-men, who were generally either Jews or Scotchmen, were insurance agents, sewing-machine agents, furniture-on-the-hire-system agents, and so forth. All had something to sell on the easiest possible terms; in fact, one might suppose, taking them on their own valuation, that they were merely stray philanthropists, wandering about the world endeavouring to make life easier for those less fortunate than themselves. In every case, however, that came under my own personal observation, I found that goods sold by these people had been purchased by my neighbours at three or four times their value. Here, again, one sees how the Registrar's Court and the County Court are made the debt collectors of

the firms who sent out these men. They positively insisted on leaving their goods, and the next thing their victims were aware of was a summons from the Registrar's or County Court. Quite two-thirds of the cases heard in these courts are of this description.

These tally-men, of course, are only visiting afflictions, but the pawnshop is a perpetual curse. At the end of our street there was a pawnshop. Before I became acquainted with these places, a friend of mine who used to pilot me about London a good deal had a joke at my expense to the effect that she could never get me past a pawnshop. The fact of the matter was, that the miscellaneous collection in the windows of the better class of these places used to attract me considerably. I did not at first even know they were pawnshops, but having a fondness for old things, and being lucky enough once or twice to pick up what turned out to be real bargains in the way of old prints, books, and china, I often stopped to look in at the window where I saw these articles displayed in delightful confusion. My acquaintance with the pawnshop was not personal until I began to know the poor intimately, and then, as one thing leads to another, by several strange coincidences, I was made acquainted with some curious tragedies among the rich and smart classes, some of the scenes of which were played in what practically was a pawnshop, though known under a more euphonious name of a "jeweller's exchange." Like all shops of this type, the pawn "hole" in Hollyhedge Street possessed two departments—one for selling the goods exposed in its window, and another which was reserved for the pawning. It is of this latter department I wish to write.

As I desired to obtain my experience at first hand, I inquired of my landlady if she knew of a friendly neighbour in our street who would accompany me to the pawnshop.

"Why, of course I do," she said. "You must go with Mrs. Collings of No. 9."

"Why Mrs. Collings?" I asked.

"Well, she is the leaver," she answered.

"The leaver?" I said. "What may that be?"

"Oh, she's the agent-like. She goes to the pawnshop with other people's goods—people who do not care to go themselves—and she gets the best price she can for them."

"Do the people hereabouts employ her a good deal?" I inquired.

"Yes. You see, she is able to get more from the pawnbroker, being known to him, and then it saves a bit of trouble."

"How does Mrs. Collings get paid?"

"She has a commission, my dear."

With the help of my landlady I was introduced to the "leaver." She was a woman of the frowsy, untidy type, about middle age, and, I am afraid, spent the greater part of her "leaving" commission on gin. She knew the business of everybody in the street, and seemed to take a hand in everything that happened, from births to funerals. Weddings were her chief delight. Whether she was a widow or not, I never knew. She lived in the most untidy-looking house in the street, and let her rooms off as lodgings for single men, who all appeared to be of the bricklayer's labourer type.

From this woman I obtained a great deal of information concerning the seamy side of poverty.

"Well, my dear, what can I do for yer?" she inquired, after she had been brought to me by my landlady.

I explained that I wanted her to take me to the pawnshop with her, to raise some money on a few personal articles.

"Why, o' course, my dear, I'll do anything to oblige. I'm off now with a little bundle for Mrs. Watkins of No. 17."

I accompanied her. On the way to the pawnshop, we had to pass a public-house, and Mrs. Collings suggested that we should "take a little drop, just to liven us up," and appeared quite huffy when I declined to follow the convivial suggestion.

"Come on, then," she cried, and without another word led me to the pawnshop. She did not enter by the door leading into the shop, but turned up an entry at the side, where a door stood open, which gave entrance to a dark passage. From out of this passage there opened a number of other doors. These doors were the entrances to a number of small compartments about four feet square.

My companion opened one door after another, but each compartment was crowded with as many women and girls as could squeeze into the space. At last, at the end of the passage, she discovered a compartment in which there were only three persons standing. Into this she insinuated herself, and I followed.

In front of this compartment, as in front of all the others, a high counter stood, and behind the counter were three or four young men and boys busily undoing or doing up parcels and bundles of clothing, boots, and linen of every description. They carried on, at the same time, a familiar conversation with the crowd of women who faced them. The place was stuffy with a curious smell of fusty linen, and there was a general air of mustiness about the customers. Many of the women seemed to be on quite friendly terms with the young men behind the counter, and a continual fire of chaff and raillery was kept up between them.

"Now then, Mrs. Collings, what 'ave yer got 'ere?" one of the young men said, as he seized my companion's bundle and proceeded to undo it and turn out the linen it contained upon the counter.



"Half-a-crown, my dear," Mrs. Collings answered.

"Can't be did, sweetheart," the youth answered, as he started to fold up the bundle again. "Make it two shillings, 'Erbert." This last remark to a small boy who was busy writing out the particulars of the transaction upon the pawn tickets.

"No, Charley; 'arf-a-crown—there's a dear. Make it 'arf-a-crown, do, and you shall come to tea on Sunday."

"Two shillings I'm making it, and I'm coming to dinner, fair one." The young man turned to another customer.

"He's a one-er, ain't he?" said one of the women in the box in a tone of admiration.

Mrs. Collings picked up the money and the ticket which had been tendered to her by the boy, and we left the place, as I had whispered to her previously that I had found half-a-crown and wouldn't pawn my things till some other day.

The pawnshop occupies a most important place in the lives of the poor. It is their bank. Every Monday morning these places are crowded with women pawning the Sunday clothes of their husbands and children for a few shillings. Every Saturday these clothes are redeemed.

Although the law only allows the pawnbroker to charge  $12\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. per annum upon the loans he advances, yet he manages, by a number of other charges, such as a halfpenny for the ticket, or a penny for the accommodation of a drawer, or for the privilege of having a garment hung up, and so on, to make up his profit to a couple of hundred per cent.

During my many adventures among the poor and working classes, and indeed in ordinary life, I have come to learn that the alien furniture-dealers and traders of that bastard description look upon our County Court merely as an institution for their convenience, and it has come to be an accepted fact that they use the County Court as their debt collectors. They

have, of course, to pay no fee as they would to a man who is a professional debt collector, and there are such people about. All they do, if they meet with a refractory customer who objects to being plundered in this wholesale manner, is simply to put the case into the County Court, and they are immediately granted an injunction for the recovery of their property, and they find their debt collected for them without further trouble on their part. Perhaps if a few ratepayers, whose money goes towards the up-keep of the police and judicial forces, took this matter in hand, and begged for some inquiry to be made into the number of cases in which the County Court is used by alien traders who rob the inhabitants of our towns, some check might be put on this disastrous business. It is a most extraordinary policy that Britain pursues in regard to her commerce; considering that honest trade is the whole foundation upon which her prosperity has been built up, and that her commerce is her strength and stay, the treatment that commercial matters receive from the hands of the Government and the extraordinary position which "society" takes with regard to people in trade, is incomprehensible. An American grocer's wife, who leaves her husband and all her household duties to take care of themselves, comes over to England with large sums of money, takes a house in Piccadilly, which her husband probably buys for her, pays large amounts to two or three society ladies, and is forthwith presented at Court, and introduced and heralded as a most desirable addition to the English social circles.

An English grocer's wife, with ambition burning in her breast to make herself one with those far-off social stars, enters into competition with our fair American friend. What is the result? The poor, homely, good-natured, plebeian Englishwoman is scouted and rejected, unless indeed she be a multi-millionaire. She finds that few people of the really

smart set will care to eat her dinners and drink her wines. These people are satiated with the dinners and wines provided free by those who are anxious to buy their way into this circle. Poor John Bull, with his uncertain h's and his nervous "my lady's" flung desperately at the head of any titled dame he is brought into contact with, is effectually snubbed and pushed out of the way. The Yankee lady sails happily forth to social distinction while the other drops out, bruised and disillusioned. I suppose the reason is that the Yankee grocer is too far away to be offensive, whereas one never knows that one may not meet the English one in one's shopping expeditions, and be greeted familiarly from over the counter.

In the same way the Government treats the British trader. In such foreign ports as Bombay, and in all the ports of the East India stations and our colonies, all British commercial ships are allowed to load only up to what is called the "Plimsoll Line." This, of course, is an exceedingly wise and necessary regulation; but look for the moment at the other side of the question. There are two ships in dock at the Bombay harbour. One is a German vessel and one a British; say they are both trading between Bombay and Zanzibar, carrying cotton, rice, and such other commodities as the commerce demands. The tonnage of the British vessel is strictly limited. The tonnage of the German vessel is limited, not by any regulations with regard to the safety of the lives of her crew, but simply according to the space that is contained within her planks, every inch of which is packed to its utmost capacity. What happens as the result of this wise British protection of the lives of her people? A few dozen of her traders are annually ruined, and the commerce that once belonged to Britain is gradually filched from her by the Germans who coal and load up their vessels in British ports without being subject

to all the shipping regulations of the British Government. In another couple of years, ladies may look forward to paying larger prices for Persian wool goods and Persian lamb furs. Householders who wish to cover their floors with Persian carpets, or decorate their walls with Eastern tapestries, will find the prices raised 20 or 30 per cent. Perfumers who deal in Persian or Turkish essential oils, such as oil of roses and other perfumes, will find that they have to pay a larger price for their goods, but they will probably find no key to this mystery. There will also be many families connected with Eastern trade in this kingdom made considerably poorer, and openings in the East for the sons of Britishers will become perceptibly fewer. Why should these things be? For the simple reason that lines of German Government subsidised ships owned by German companies, in which the Kaiser himself is said to have large interests, are now entering into unfair competition with British vessels. These vessels ply in Eastern waters, and up the Persian Gulf, and because they are allowed to leave British ports with far heavier freights than British steamers, and because the German traders will allow the natives longer credit, and be content to trade for very small profits, or even loss at first, being subsidised by their Government, they will, with octopus-like tenacity, enfold in their greedy grip all, or most of the trade that lies in these waters.

German clerks, German tailors, and German shop-keepers of all descriptions will go out on these vessels, paying incredibly small fares, and take up positions in India and Persia at salaries upon which no Englishman could live.

The marriage market is in a bad enough condition in England now, but there has always been a fair horizon in the East. Many and many a young girl has found a home and a husband abroad who never would have done so here. But in



a few years this outlet for feminine ambition will also be closed, for the young men will no longer be able to obtain these well-paid clerkships or positions in the large shops; their places will be taken by cheap foreigners. Looking at the matter in this way, it is one which concerns very closely, not only the British male, but also the girls and women in this country.

We are not content with encouraging the aliens to overflow the British Isles; but we help them to crowd out our people even in our foreign possessions and trading ports.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE EDGE OF THE STREET—PESTILENT SHELTER

BRITISH commerce filters through all grades of society, and I am able to give some homely examples of trade within our own borders, which may prove unfamiliar to many whom the larger matters of commerce interest considerably.

It was some little time after I had started my journeys into Poverty Kingdom that I became acquainted with several of the "gutter merchants" who advance the commerce of our cities.

These curious creatures are familiar sights in almost every large town in the kingdom, and they are strangely alike in general appearance. The same musty, lack-life figures, the limp, "asking" hand, and the common air of expectancy, mark the street hawkers.

I myself learnt to my cost that the fortunes made by these street merchants exist only in the imaginations of those "students of humanity" whom Providence has blest with liberal optimism in dealing with facts.

I have been a street pedlar, studying the life in several different localities, and when I came to look at my bank-book after the experiment, I found that a few days of this commercial speculation had been in a small way as disastrous as the Stock Exchange to a novice. The number of unsuccessful traders is great. Once in a fried fish shop, with Mr. C. and two women and a man "in the trade" with

whom we had made friends, I heard the marvellous story of a man who had made £3 one never-to-be-forgotten day, by selling an article known as the "Fifteen Puzzle" in Fleet Street; and of another who has made £1 a day for three weeks by selling a mechanical toy. The men hold almost a monopoly of such quick-selling novelties as these.

At this party I also learnt another secret of the pedlars' trade, and that is, that a "pitch" near the Stock Exchange is best for selling mechanical toys. "The gents tike 'em 'ome fur the kids to 'ome sweet 'ome,'" said the man, who was dedicating his knowledge to us at the feast for which we paid.

The friend who initiated me into the mysteries of this peculiar branch of trade was a woman I got acquainted with one night on the steps near Waterloo Bridge. She had drawn a blank day: it was raining, and she had no money to buy a shelter or food. Her miserable stock was sodden and useless. Mr. C., the friend who accompanied me on nearly all my wanderings in London, was with me at the time, and I told her that he would give me some money if we could set up somewhere as pedlars, and I promised her a share of the takings if she would let me go along in her company. She was too worn-out and subdued to make terms, and the prospect of a meal and shelter from the rain was enough for her. She was very sympathetic as regards Mr. C., whom she judged was the usual specimen of a hulking loafer ready to live on his poor wife's earnings.

We sent the old woman off with a shilling and prospective appointment for next day.

Before I started out to meet her, I had to rearrange my costume. It is hardly credible how difficult it is to dress the part to the life when one is actually living with the people one wishes to be taken for.

I had to supply myself with the "duds" for street peddling.

The skirt I wore cost elevenpence, the inevitable black hat was rusty and crushed, and the shoulder-cape bought from a "step-girl" made up my costume. When I met the old woman in the morning, she greeted me with :

"You'll have to get a brief, my dear."

"A brief?" I asked.

"Yes, a license."

"And where shall I get one?"

"Police station near where you live."

Accordingly, we presented ourselves at a West End police station. Paying the sum of five shillings, I was given a form to fill up, naming a reference to my character. One of the questions asked me by the inspector in charge was : "Have you ever been in prison?"

I am getting used to this inquiry, as it was one I had to answer when travelling to America the previous year in a first saloon.

A license was given to me without further difficulty.

My friend and I started off to a small shop in a court leading from the Strand, where I was to buy my swag, as the stock-in-trade of pedlars is invariably called. There are two or three shops devoted to the business in this neighbourhood. These supply the pedlars of the West End with their goods. The East End street sellers obtain their fancy articles chiefly from Houndsditch. Once I bought my stock there from a Polish Jew, and at another time from a squint-eyed German Jew.

"We'll pitch in Fleet Street," my companion said, after we had bought our trayful of wares from the buxom lady who smoked a pipe and held sway in the little swag shop off the Strand ; and within an hour we had there taken up a position in the gutter.

Diligently I tried to impress uninterested passers-by with



the beauty and utility of my wares. For several hours I endeavoured to sell laces and matches, but I scarcely got so much as a look at my tray. At last a small boy bought a box of matches, and soon after a workman bought a pair of laces. An hour or so after this rush of business, a well-dressed woman wanted me to sell her two pairs of laces for one penny.

My price was one penny a pair.

She refused to pay me this sum, and went off, declaring that she had never heard of such a thing.

It was now getting dusk. I felt tired and hungry. My takings during a long afternoon amounted to  $1\frac{1}{2}$ d., or  $\frac{3}{4}$ d. profit.

My companion had not done much better ; she had taken fourpence for her day's work.

She told me, in answer to my inquiries as to where she intended sleeping, that she would go to Hanbury Street, Whitechapel, where the Salvation Army have a shelter for women. I asked her if she would mind me going with her.

"Not at all, my dear," she replied. "You'll have to pay tuppence for yer lay down, but it is as comferable a place for the money as you'll find all over London."

It is a long walk from Fleet Street to Whitechapel, and by the time I arrived there I was very tired.

Hanbury Street is in the very centre of the Jews' quarter. Like most of the Salvation Army institutions, its exterior is not imposing. When we arrived, gathered round a narrow door were a number of women of the homeless class.

The majority of them were old. Some had bundles, all were ragged, and some were almost bootless.

A few minutes after I joined them the door was opened by a sturdy, sweet-faced girl of twenty, clad in the uniform of the Salvation Army. Without speaking, she held out her hand,

and one by one the homeless women dropped twopence into her open palm, and passed in through the doorway.

Following their example, I also tendered my money, and passed into a long hall—clean, and not without some effort at artistic decoration. In the centre of the hall burned a bright fire, which lent an air of cheerfulness and even welcome to the place.

Still following the lead of my companions, I purchased at a bar in the passage a mug of tea and a large piece of bread and jam, for which I had to pay one penny. I carried my bread and tea into a spacious room in which were ranged a number of backed seats, facing a platform. Several Salvation Army officials were present in the room.

Seating myself, I ate my bread and jam and drank my tea—both of which were really good. Before my meal was finished a lady, clad in the familiar red and blue of the “Army,” mounted the platform and commenced a service. Hymns were sung and prayers offered, and an earnest address delivered.

A remarkable feature of this place was, that as soon as the women got inside, they brightened up and became quite cheerful. They seemed quite at home, and the Salvation Army lasses were sympathetic and homely.

After the service we were allowed to go to bed. The bedroom had evidently been at some period a chapel. At one end was a platform, and on either side were galleries. On the floor were ranged a number of oblong boxes, the sides of which are about twelve inches high. Inside these boxes are mattresses of American leather stuffed with seaweed. Another leather is used for covering. Many of the lodgers bring bundles of old newspapers and news’ placards which they use for pillows and additional covering.

The place was scrupulously clean, and I passed a very good

night. This perhaps because I was so tired. In the morning I had breakfast, which cost me another penny, and at eight o'clock made my way westwards again, this time alone.

I took my stand next to a woman whom I had often noticed standing near the Savoy Hotel in the Strand. In her arms she carried a baby, and by her side was a little boy. She offered matches to the passers-by with a very woeful look indeed.

I noticed that several people gave her money and refused to take her wares. After some little time I entered into conversation with her, and she confided to me that match-peddling was no good unless you had a baby. She also told me that the baby in her arms was not her own, but one that she got twopence a day for minding while its mother worked in a laundry. Thus the baby brought in money in two ways. I asked her if I could get a baby anywhere.

She told me then that a regular trade was done in hired babies, and that if you got the right sort it paid very well to have a baby—"But they're a job to carry, my dear," she said. However, she promised to find a baby by next day that I could hire.

My takings amounted to sixpence that day, but the woman with the babies took one shilling and ninepence, thus proving clearly that these poor mites do create sympathy and increase the profits of those who have them.

There is not enough positive cruelty to these little ones to warrant the interference of the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children, but it requires little imagination to realise how ruinous it is to their health.

These babies are held for hours in the same position, exposed to every kind of weather, their food is irregular and quite unsuitable.

Many of the little ones pine and die, yet neither the mothers nor the hirers know why.

I hired my baby for sixpence from a woman in a street off the Fulham Road. The little thing was quite a professional, and I must submit in favour of the mother, that she was a working woman who had to leave her little children while she was at work, and that she was earnest in her demand that I should look after her little one and keep it warm.

I had it long enough to prove that a baby is a valuable adjunct for a street pedlar. I took two shillings the first two hours I had it. I could not bear to keep the mite out longer. It is a cruel practice. The whole life of the children of the vagabond class is cruel enough. No one who is not familiar with their surroundings can realise how grave a danger to the State are these children bred in crime and degradation who are growing up to infest our cities.

I was very much impressed with the fact that the women street pedlars I had talked to had none of them any fixed abode. Later, I learned that as a class, the street pedlars frequent philanthropic shelters and common lodging-houses, and thus save a strain on their uncertain earnings that regular room rent would be. I asked the woman with the baby where she was going to sleep, and she told me at No. —, a lodging-house for women in Kensington Street. It seemed so far off that I suggested Westminster. My companion told me that she would sooner walk the streets all night than sleep in one of them Westminster "kip" houses.

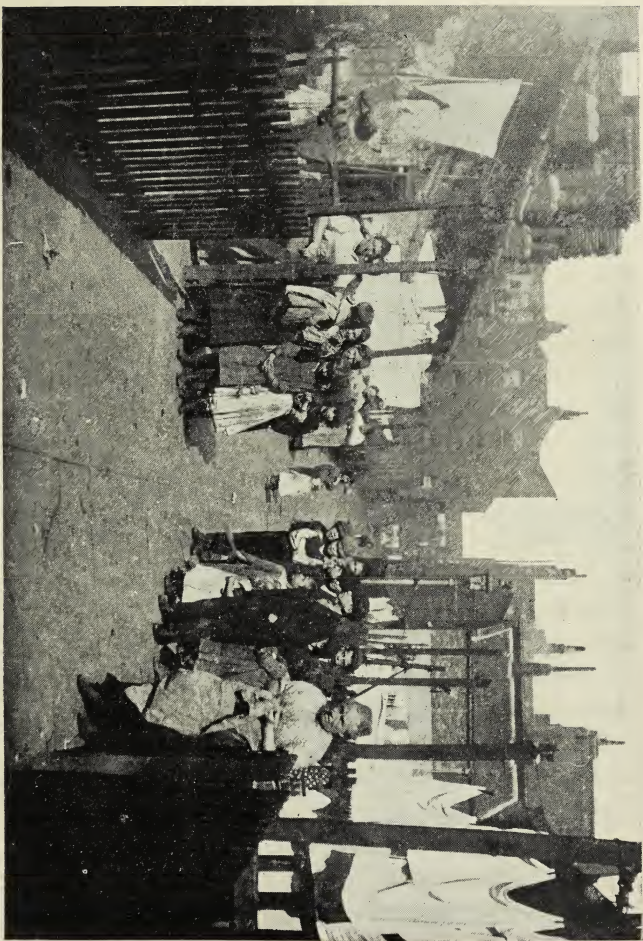
"Why?" I had asked.

"They ain't decent," she answered; "and them as go there would rob you of your shoe-strings if you gave 'em a chance."

"Surely they will not rob one of their own class?"

"Class, my gal, the likes of them ain't no class."





A POOR STREET IN LONDON.



SINGING IN THE STREETS FOR A LIVING.

This description only interested me, and disregarding the advice, I made up my mind to explore one of these undesirable doss-houses. When the sun had set, I bade good-bye to the baby-minder, and reminded her of her promise to find someone to lend me a baby.

Under the shadow of the venerable Abbey there are a number of mean streets. There I intended to search until I found a suitable lodging-house wherein to investigate.

Centuries have passed since this neighbourhood offered shelter and immunity from arrest to cut-throats, thieves, and vagabonds. Here was situated the Abbey Sanctuary. Times have changed: brick boxes with slate lids have taken the place of the old timber-built dens that once stood here, but the general bad character of the inhabitants still remains.

Some of the worst people in London may be met within a stone's-throw of St. Stephen's.

"Beds, fourpence a night." This, painted on the side of a lamp fixed over a dingy doorway, led me to believe that here I should find the lodging I was looking for. On the steps were three or four women, bareheaded and blasphemous. One woman carried a tin beer-can; the other three carried babies—poor little, ill-clad, ill-fed, white-faced mites. While I hesitated to enter, the woman with the beer-can actually put the vessel to a baby's lips and let it drink. Somehow, I could not make up my mind to enter here, and after meeting Mr. C., I went on to another lodging-house in the district.

These common lodging-houses seem always to be placed in one particular street in the neighbourhood where they exist. It is quite a rare occurrence to find a solitary lodging-house in one street and another a few streets off. The "business" seems best run in company.

The one we selected was in a mean street thick with

garbage. There was a public-house at one end, and throngs of evil-looking men and women passed in and out of the doors. The lodging-house we sought was one that gave accommodation to both men and women, and there were some dreadful specimens of the "gentler" sex gathered round the door. My experience is, that when women are degraded and brutalised, they are even more horrible than men of the same class. Mr. C. and I went in together, pushing past the filthy crowd at the entrance which was common to all the lodgers.

We found ourselves in a badly-lighted hall, at the end of which was a staircase leading down to some mysterious region below, from where rose an evil-smelling stream of hot, bad air, and such a babble of bad language, that for a moment my courage failed, and I nearly turned and fled. At last, mastering my fear and disgust, I descended the remaining steps, with Mr. C. close behind me, and we passed into a long, double room filled with smoke.

Numbers of men were smoking, and steam arose from cooking which was being done over a large open fire at one end of the room. Hanging on lines near the fireplace were articles of clothing, which appeared to have been washed and placed to dry. In the centre of the room were two long, dirty deal tables. Beside these were several forms without backs. With the exception of a rough dresser fixed to one of the walls and a large cupboard in one of the corners, the tables and benches constituted the whole furniture of this strange apartment.

Never shall I forget the misery of this room, although it was not until the morning that I could see how utterly filthy and disgusting it was. The semi-darkness of the night hid its dirt, but could not conceal its smell. On the dresser and on the fireplace mantel-piece were plates, saucepans, dirty



teapots, mugs, and remains of food. The whole establishment afforded an untidy, wretched, and uncomfortable shelter.

Bad as the place was, it was made yet more horrible by its inhabitants. The most appalling collection of villainous, dirty, and evil-smelling wretches were gathered there.

It appeared that we had arrived at a time when the occupants of this kitchen were greatly excited. Just before we entered a man had been arrested in this very room for beating his wife so badly that she had had to be taken to the hospital.

It was not until the woman was nearly murdered that the other cowardly occupants of the kitchen had interfered. It seems to be quite a creed with these vagabonds not to interfere in the fight between man and wife. Just now the whole affair was being excitedly discussed in the most terrible language I have ever heard.

At the corner of the table nearest to which I stood sat an old grey-haired woman. Her bonnet hung down on her back supported by its strings tied round her neck, her thin arms bare to the elbows. On the table in front of her was a greasy paper filled with fried fish and scraps of fried potatoes. These she was eating with her fingers. How she masticated her food I could not imagine, as she seemed not to have a tooth in her head. Looking up she saw me watching her. A smile spread over her puckered old face. She moved a little further up the seat and beckoned me to sit down by her side. This I did.

Then, with her mouth full of food she mumbled what I understood to be an invitation to me to eat with her. I think I must have shuddered, for she turned her bleary old eyes on me and gazed in my face for a moment.

"You ain't been 'ere afore, gal?" she said.

"No," I blurted out.

"What's brought ye here, then?" she queried.

"Misfortune," I answered.

"Ah! down on your luck, eh? Well, buck up and have a bit of grub—nothing like grub to buck you up, 'cept beer, when your luck's out." Then she pushed the paper of fish and potatoes towards me.

Unlovely as these people are, they have the redeeming grace of charity. They are nearly always willing to share their food or covering with one of their own class who arouses their sympathy. And ignorant as they are, they all have their philosophy.

As I sat near the old woman, a big, brutal-looking man came across the room, and staring at me for a moment, said to the old woman beside me:

"Hallo, Liz, who is yer pal?"

"I dunno, Jim, a lodger, ain't she?" she asked; then turning to me she said: "You are a-staying here, ain't yer?"

I said I wanted to, but I had not seen anyone in charge, and then I pointed to Mr. C., who pretended to be nodding near the door.

"Oh, that's all right," the man said. "I am the depety; give us yer 'oof."

The old woman had to explain to me that he was asking for my money. Mr. C. came up and gave him a shilling. He took it and told us to come up to the "orffice for yer smash." This I understood to mean the change, so we followed him out of the kitchen and up the dark stairs to the entrance hall. He unlocked a door and entered a room, and presently returned with fourpence. I asked him where I was to sleep.

"Want to go to bed now?" he said.

"Yes," I answered, for I felt I could not face the kitchen again.

"Oh, well, go up them stairs, and your room will be the first on the left," he said, pointing to the stairs that led to the rooms above.

I mounted the stairs and found a landing dimly lighted by a gas jet turned very low. Near the gas bracket, fastened on the wall, were the rules and regulations issued by the London County Council, concerning the management of common lodging-houses. I paused for a moment to read these, then turned to the first door on the left, opened it, and found a dimly-lighted room containing ten beds very close together. The room was as yet unoccupied.

I entered and turned up the gas and examined the beds and the room. The floor was bare and dirty. The walls and ceiling, however, were whitewashed. At the single window of the room a pair of dirty, tattered curtains hung. The bed-clothing appeared fairly clean. For a moment I stood and wondered which bed I ought to occupy for the night, not knowing if any were engaged. I did not care to go downstairs again and ask the man in charge, so making up my mind I took the one nearest the door.

Tired out, I was soon asleep, but was speedily awakened, for the bed had other occupants besides myself, and the walls and ceiling, notwithstanding the whitewash, harboured all manner of creeping horrors. The noise downstairs continued, people began to come upstairs, in the hall below a fight took place, a number of men seemingly the worse for liquor stumbled up the stairs singing loudly.

It was not until Big Ben had struck one o'clock that the house became comparatively quiet. One by one the other occupants of the room came to bed. There was not much conversation, but what there was, was profane. Once during

the night the door was opened and a man's head appeared ; he did not enter the room, but gently closed the door after he had looked in.

I heard a distant clock strike three, and then, being unable to endure the stuffiness of that ugly room with its heavy-breathing occupants any longer, I crept down to the kitchen. Mr. C. had said he would spend the night there studying the various types of humanity that drifted in.

I found him dozing, with his arms leaning on the table. We thought at first of slipping quickly away, but decided to stay and see the morning life of a mixed lodging-house. Mr. C. and I sat talking in low whispers of our plans. Several men and two women were lying on the forms and tables fast asleep, contrary to the regulations, which forbid the use of any room for sleeping that is not specially licensed for the purpose.

At five o'clock a boy of about fourteen came into the room. The gas was then alight ; it had been burning all night. The boy began to poke up the almost dead fire.

In answer to my inquiry as to where I could wash, he showed me into a dark and evil-smelling place about eight feet square. Against one of the walls were four grimy earthenware troughs. Over each trough was a tap. Hanging on the door was a coarse towel absolutely black and stiff with dirt. Holding my hands underneath the running water, I washed them and wiped them on my handkerchief. This done, I returned to the kitchen.

A woman and two small children had entered whilst I had been performing my very primitive ablutions. The woman took from the dresser a saucepan, went to the tap where I had been washing, filled it with water and put it on the fire to boil. When the water boiled she took a tea-pot from the dresser and made tea. She also took from the dresser a



basin, into which she poured some of the hot water she was not using for tea-making. In this basin she washed the faces of her children, wiping them with her apron, then to my horror, she threw away the dirty water from the basin and filled it with tea, which she and the children drank.

(The tables were strewn with broken food, fish-bones, basins, and beer-cans. The floor was covered with filth and dirt to a most disgusting degree. The dreadful odours of this badly ventilated room were almost overpowering.) A man rose from one of the seats, shook himself, lit a dirty clay pipe, and not ill-humouredly wished me "Good morning." I saw that he was the man who had taken our money last night. He went to one corner of the room, took up a broom and commenced to clean up. This consisted of his dragging the biggest pieces of refuse that littered the floor towards the fireplace; he gathered them together in a shovel and threw them on the fire. Then he went across the room to a box that contained sand, and spread a few handfuls over the dirty floor. This constituted probably his daily hygienic efforts.

I stumbled up the dark staircase and out into the street, thanking God for the clean, cool rain and sweet morning air.

I have since been in a house reserved for women. There are, I think, about twenty-five licensed common lodging-houses for women only. These houses require from fourpence to sixpence for the use of a bed. As a general thing, the accommodation provided for women is inferior to that provided for men and the prices higher.

There are, of course, many unlicensed places of refuge in London, but only the initiated can find these, and though I heard them talked of, I knew it would be impossible for me to investigate them. Of licensed common lodging-houses there are some 115 in London, and the prices for beds range from fourpence to sixpence.

The County Council regulations for these licensed lodging-houses are strict enough.

A medical officer inspects the premises occasionally, but the conditions obtaining in most of them are bad.

There can hardly be a remedy for breaking of laws, overcrowding, and insanitary conditions among a vagabond class, unless decency is enforced with a strong hand.

No common lodging-house ought to be run as a private individual enterprise. I have been in a good many of these at different times, and everything I saw convinced me that a speedy reform is urgently needed. In the matter of securing for women in London respectable and sufficient shelter much yet remains to be done.

The London County Council and several philanthropic institutions have built lodging-houses for men. There are the Rowton Houses, and the Deptford County Council Lodging-House, but there are no similar places for women.

There are a very few scattered shelters, such as the Church Army Shelter, the Dormitory, Providence Row, Whitechapel, which affords practically free shelter to destitute women, but such refuges are like wells in the Sahara, few and far between.

A curious sight once attracted me during my journeyings in the East End, and it seemed to me an eloquent condemnation of our loafing men. This was the oasis of vagabondage in the alien quarter of Spitalfields. There, among a foreign population of hard, driving, greedy, dirty, but endlessly industrious folk, I found the lodging-houses in Brick Lane, Flower and Dean Streets, and Dorset Street, practically the only houses in the neighbourhood occupied by English people, and their condition was so destitute that they could afford no better shelter than was offered by these filthy places. The aliens could make homes for themselves, but our idle people lived in the streets and slept in doss-houses.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE BREEDING-PLACE OF THIEVES

I HAD been reading a variety of correspondence on the deterioration of the race, together with various panaceas for this evil. On one side were those tender humanitarians who think that all discipline and judicial or military severity emanate from the devil, and on the other hand, there was the reiterated cry of the necessity for conscription. I had seen a good deal of John Hooligan in his native haunts, and certainly my prescription for him would have been compulsory service in the Army, where he would have been licked into some semblance of humanity. I had seen little children crippled and tortured by hulking brutes of men who so swell the ranks of the unemployed. I have known women who, within an hour of their confinement, had been obliged to work for the support of such ruffians as these, enduring from them besides all manner of unspeakable brutality. My inclination, therefore, was to prescribe for these amiable gentlemen strictly judicial floggings. The only thing it seemed to me they had any regard for was their own precious skins. Nevertheless, though my experiences among these people had been fairly intimate, I felt that I was not capable of forming a just opinion of their character or needs till I had made more prolonged studies among them. I had several times, in company with friends interested in prison and rescue work, attended what were practically thieves' suppers. I had made myself

acquainted with the working of several branches of the Prisons Mission, and now my anxiety was by some possibility to place myself in a position to judge of the lives of these people without the prejudice that one naturally has while seeing them as an outsider. Of course it was an impossibility for me to get myself committed to jail, or to indulge in any crime that would have given me a passport into the select circle of criminals, and I was at my wits' end to know how I might accomplish my purpose. Then I bethought me of my friend Mr. C. If there is one man in the whole of London who would be likely to know anything of this side of life, it would certainly be the man who had been my guide on many occasions when we had sallied forth to the haunts of misery and poverty, disguised beyond recognition, as wanderers ourselves. Mr. C. was not enthusiastic about this plan of mine. He considered that my knowledge of the people was quite intimate and extensive enough. But I said to him :

"I wish you would help me. I really would like very much to spend some time among the hooligan and criminal poor without actually living among them night and day. I would like to form some idea as to what remedies might be applied to improving their condition and humanising them."

Mr. C. laughed. "The best way to humanise that kind of character," he said, "as everyone who has worked among them knows, is to have them flogged 'once a week reg'lar.'"

Having, however, no hope at all that such a just state of affairs would come about on this side of the Millennium, I coaxed Mr. C. to make some investigations for me ; and he managed to get hold of a woman who was well acquainted with one of the most dreadful localities in London. She was a working woman, and at one time filled the office of district nurse, but she took to drink and lost her health, and so by



degrees had fallen very low. She had, however, been rescued by one of the missions working in the East End, and through this agency was introduced to one of the prison missionaries, who, seeing a possibility of making her useful, set her to work in this particular slum, where from time to time she visited the women, and gave notices of such children as she found starving or deserted. I think that her work had completed her reformation, for when we knew her, though she was very poor, she certainly was perfectly respectable. She was not exactly prepossessing to look upon, but seemed quite honest and straightforward. After hearing her talk for a little while, Mr. C. and I arranged with her to procure a slum residence, where I might go with her and stay for a day or so at a time. Between these two friends the necessary details were accomplished. They rented a room, and fitted it with a few very rough pieces of furniture. The expenditure on household fittings, I think, amounted to about nine shillings, for we bought the things at one of those sad little second-hand furniture shops which are characteristic of the poorest neighbourhoods. I write "sad" because the windows of these shops reveal so much more to me than their frowsy show of various odds and ends. The rickety tables, the broken chairs, the rusty fire-irons, the faded pictures and battered ornaments speak only too plainly of the struggles and miseries of the unfortunates who once owned them. Poor creatures ! who in numbers of cases had been forced to sell their miserable oddments in order to get food and warmth for hungry little ones perhaps.

"I don't mind gettin' rid of my clobber or tools so much ; but 'avin' to sell the poor old sticks fair breaks my 'art," I once heard a disconsolate out-of-work say, as he described, in husky tones, the sale of his home for food.

I had arranged with Mr. C. and our new-found accomplice

—if so I may term her—to meet me at a point which was within a few minutes' walk of Providence Court, the slum we had chosen. When I arrived at this meeting-place I found both my champions waiting. Mr. C. shouldered my bundle of bedding and clothes, which, according to his advice, I had done up in an old piece of sacking, and bade us follow him. For a hundred yards or so, we had to pass along the crowded pavement of a poor people's market, and I found it difficult to keep near my companions. It amused me to see the strenuous way in which Mr. C. pushed his way through the noisy, jostling crowd who, with the exception of a few good-humoured cries, such as "Mind the grease," "Don't push, governor, shove!" "Anybody seen a moving job?" etc., paid no more attention to my burly companion's butting and pushing—except to open a way for him—than if he had been doing them a favour. I have seen many crowds in many countries, but I do not think that a more good-humoured crowd exists than one sees on a Saturday night in a poor people's market-place. I have often, on Saturday evenings, visited such market-places as Chapel Street, Islington, the New Cut, Lambeth, Lambeth Walk, East Lane, Walworth, and from twenty to thirty other places of this class to be found in and about London. At such times and in such localities, the working man is undoubtedly seen at his best. He has a whole day and two nights between him and the return of toil on Monday morning. For a little time at least, there is the luxury of wages to spend, and relaxation, and the comparative comfort of food and warmth, therefore there is much gaiety and lightness of heart. Only those who have actually lived by stress of muscle from Monday morning until Saturday noon, can appreciate the relief that comes with the weekly half-holiday and the Sunday's rest.

My guides turned from this market into a small street

which appeared darker perhaps than it really was, owing to the contrast it made with the well-lighted thoroughfare we had just left. A few yards up this street Mr. C. halted, and pointing to a dismal-looking entry, told me it was down there that Mrs. Jebb had a room and had rented one for me. The place appeared so dark and so fearful that my heart failed, but Mr. C. and the woman encouraged me.

"Don't give the show away," said Mr. C. "No one will interfere with you ; they think we are relations of Mrs. Jebb's, and she has given out that we are."

He went on and I followed with Mrs. Jebb, past a group of hooligan men and women who stood in the tunnel-looking entry which led into the *cul-de-sac* beyond, known as Providence Court. Providence! How came this awful place to have such a name? For every person who has dwelt within its area from the time of its insanitary inception until to-day, has daily tempted Providence and dallied with disease and death. The place is nothing but a stagnant, festering back-wash of humanity, where naught but crime and disease can flourish. The houses standing round this court were thirty in number, and with the exception of those facing the entry, none of them had any rear windows or back air outlets whatever. The only ventilation in them was from the narrow area in front, and in this yard all the sanitary conveniences for the houses were situated. What little washing was done, the women-folk did in the open yard. The water for domestic use had to be drawn from two taps fastened to the sanitary offices in the middle of this place. The slops and dirty water were emptied into an open sink in the centre of the court. In wet weather pools of dirty water—in some places ankle-deep—had to be waded through to reach the houses. The whole place seemed nothing better than a

baleful bacteria farm spreading poison throughout the neighbourhood. The "fever cart," as the inhabitants of this court call the ambulance of the Asylum's Board, constantly stopped at the entry, and hardly a week went by without the children of the place having an opportunity of crowding round the nurses as they carried from one or other of the houses a poor, dying child or a woman too ill to move, victims of rack-rent and sanitary negligence. It was in the early summer that I went with Mrs. Jebb and Mr. C. to explore this region. Mrs. Jebb had two small rooms on the same landing as mine, and Mr. C. and she looked after me. Mrs. Jebb lived among these people, and had rendered herself so necessary to them that they accepted her at last as belonging to themselves. She had the women's confidence, and nursed them and their babies in their hour of need. She rescued many a young child and girl from criminality, and many a budding hooligan was, through her influence, removed to happier surroundings.

In making our way to the house where my room had been engaged we were obliged to step over several persons of both sexes who were lying upon the ground outside their houses. Others were sitting with their backs to the wall drinking beer from cans. It appeared that the inhabitants of Providence Court had elected to spend the night *al fresco*. Before I had been an hour in my own room I discovered the reason for this unusual desire for fresh air exhibited by my neighbours, and only fear and modesty restrained me from sleeping in the open air myself. The houses were all infested with vermin, and sleeping out was the rule for the simple reason that there could be no sleeping in.

"Lots of us don't never sleep inside durin' the 'ot weather, me gal," a woman declared to me. "Yer see, yer can't sleep indoors unless yer gets bug-proof."



"Bug-proof?" I said.

"Yes, blind drunk, don't yer understand?"

My courage sank to zero, for I knew that this remedy did not lie within my reach. I invented, however, some other remedies for this disgusting form of insomnia. I began by carefully insulating my bedstead by standing its legs in four basins of water; then I erected a canopy of net over my head, and by this means, together with a plentiful supply of carbolic and Keating's powder, obtained a sleeping-place. My clothes I kept at the foot of my bed wrapped in disinfected sheets.

The house in which Mrs. Jebb and I stayed was rented from a company who were the owners of the court. It consisted of six rooms and was tenanted by fifteen persons. There was the landlord himself, who paid the company ten shillings a week for the house, and sublet four of the rooms, retaining two for himself and his family, who numbered eight persons. The occupants of these two rooms were the landlord and his wife, a young man, a relative of the wife's, and five children. What the landlord did for a living I never found out. The young man picked up precarious employment by daily attending, or "hanging on," as it is called, at a neighbouring cab-rank. This man, as far as I could judge, was the only man living in the court, except Mr. C., who had anything to do that bore any resemblance to honest effort. Most of the men in the place did not even make a pretence of honesty, and openly acknowledged that they lived "on the cross"—that is, by dishonesty.

One evening, while sitting with Mrs. Jebb, we were startled by quite an uproar in the open yard, and on looking out from the window, which opened into the court, we found that the place had been raided by the police, who had swooped down both in plain clothes and in uniform. The object of their

very unwelcome visit was to arrest a notorious criminal, and they soon led from one of the houses a sullen, low-browed ruffian and dragged him from the court, hand-cuffed and well guarded ; they had arrested him for burglary and supposed murder.

For hours after the departure of the police and their prisoner, the inhabitants of this dreadful place stood round in groups discussing the affair, and although one heard many expressions of sympathy for the ruffian who had been arrested, and many denunciations of the police who had arrested him, not a single word of pity for the unfortunate victim of the crime was uttered. Many sinister threats of what was to happen to a certain person, an erstwhile inhabitant of the place, and companion of the arrested man, were prevalent that night. This man, in the general opinion of the others, had contributed to the discovery of the murderer by "narking"—that is, by acting as a police spy. I am sure that had the person so denounced presented himself in his old haunts that night, whether he had betrayed his companion or not, the feeling against him was so strong that he would have been done to death by those savages. All through the night crowds of men and women gathered round the door of the house from which the suspect had been dragged. These people were comforting, or trying to comfort, the woman who had lived with the arrested man. Every few minutes she gave vent to her feelings in a flood of screams, curses, and foul language.

"They'll top him ; they'll top him. I know they will ; I know they will !" she screamed.

"Oh, no, they won't ; we'll get him off, old girl. They can't bring it 'ome to 'im, an' they'll 'ave to prove it plain afore they can 'ang 'im," said a man, trying to calm her.

During the night, after the arrest, the children of the court were mad with excitement. They ran from one group to

another eagerly listening to the denunciations of the police and the copper's "nark." For days after, these precocious mites varied their games, which usually consisted of playing drunken mother and father, by inventing new ones, wherein the central figures were the suspected murderer and the police spy. At one time the murderer would escape from prison, and at another he would be rescued at the moment he was about to be solemnly hanged by a diminutive *Jack Ketch* of ten.

In all these slum games the policeman was treated as a natural enemy of mankind, and was invariably ill-treated and discomfited by these embryo gaol-birds.

But to return to the discussions which followed the arrest. One speech which was repeated to me I think expressed clearly the feeling of hatred this class bears for the guardians of the peace. Beneath our window, in the centre of a group of young hooligans, stood a lad of not more than twenty. He said with curses :

"'S 'elp my Gawd, if I knew for certain I was a-goin' ter peg out ter-morrer, I'd go strite out o' this 'ere court, an' I'd out a b—— rosser ter-night."

The term "rosser" is the slang title applied to the police.

A few days after the arrest, Mrs. Jebb and I were called down from our rooms one morning by the landlord, to see a man who was canvassing the neighbours on behalf of the suspected murderer.

"I 'ave called on yer," he said, "to see if yer will come a bit towards the mouthpiece of Ned Gilson."

This was the name of the arrested man.

I did not dare to show that I was bewildered at the request, and my instinct told me, although the language was unfamiliar, that the man was asking for a subscription towards

the defence, and when I saw Mrs. Jebb give him sixpence, I did the same.

He entered the amount on a dirty piece of paper. This practice of canvassing a neighbourhood on behalf of a criminal is quite common. Publicans and others are systematically terrorised into adding their names to these subscription lists. Gangs of brutal-looking men—friends of some ruffian upon whom the hand of justice has recently fallen—make their way into the small shops, and literally demand, with threats, money from the shop-keepers to defend their companions. From Providence Court there sallied forth every day such gangs, who, like packs of wolves, preyed in concert upon the unwary. Swooping down upon street book-makers, whose business lays them open to blackmail, they looted them of money. I have often heard descriptions of these “ramping” expeditions, how such a man was “bounced” out of two quid (blackmailed for two sovereigns), or another “held up for a fiver”—that is, robbed of a £5 note. Gangs of vagabonds lived about this neighbourhood, who daily obtained money by threat, making a trade of terrorism and a business of blackmail. Children scarcely able to walk crawled into shops and under the stalls of the adjoining market, filching the fruit or anything their tiny hands could seize.

“Who’s a-comin’ out nickin’?” some urchin of six or seven would say, and followed by a little gang of children, would go off on what was called a “nickin’” expedition, which means a thieving raid. As they grew older, they were initiated by more experienced criminals into the art of “box-lifting”—that is, till-stealing. A shop where the takings were kept in the old-fashioned sliding drawer under the counter would be marked. The shop would be watched, and if it was left a minute unattended, one of the smaller boys would creep in on his hands and knees, insinuate



himself round the counter, gently withdraw the till, then creep out again, and hand it to one of his companions, who would immediately put it into a bag brought for the purpose ; then they would decamp.

I had explained to me some of the mysteries of pocket-picking. This is a profession requiring a great deal of practice. To gently turn a man's pockets inside out without the wearer's knowledge is a feat not performed without much skill. Those who follow this light-fingered business enter the profession young. Every year Providence Court turns out one or more efficient "hooks"—that is, pick-pockets who are adepts in "mugging a red" or "pinching a leather," which in plain English means taking a watch or stealing a purse. Some of the women were passers of bad money, and once a creature came to Mrs. Jebb offering her a half share in the plunder if she would go out and change some counterfeit coin. Needless to say she pleaded fear, saying she was not experienced enough. The woman forthwith began telling her how she should go into the shop and buy some few articles with a careless air, for which she must pay with the false tokens, getting in return a considerable amount in change. This of course would be fair money. This person was extremely disgusted with Mrs. Jebb for refusing to "risk" doing such a thing. It seems that she was getting a little nervous about playing the game herself, because a great deal of bad money had lately been passed in the neighbourhood, and shop-keepers were beginning to get suspicious. The police also were on the look-out. The woman was in touch with a gang of coiners, and bought supplies from the "smashers," as the men are called who act as agents for the coiners. The location of the coiners' dens is kept secret even from the "snide-pitchers," which is the slang name for the actual passers of the counterfeit

coins. A few of the men—and these were the better dressed—were professional “tale-pitchers.” These creatures went off every morning to the West End of London in search of plunder, or “mug-finding,” as they called their profession. They went with the regularity of respectable men going to do legitimate business, and it was from their ranks that the men came who were adepts at luggage-stealing at the London termini.

This system of crime, too, has its particular slang, and is known as “toby-lifting” by the rogues who practise it. The thieves’ vocabulary is a somewhat large one and needs a dictionary to itself. To “out a man” is to murder him. To “do a burst” is to commit a burglary. To “chive” a man is to stab him, and the expression “to put him through it” means assault. Stealing is called “lifting.” Cheating at cards, as is done with the three card trick, is to “work the boards.” To pass forged cheques or worthless ones is to “fly the kite.” A forger is a “blacksmith,” and a race-course swindler or welsher is spoken of as a “shiser.” A thief is a “head”; a policeman in uniform a “flat” or a “rosser.” A detective is called a “split”; while prison is known as “Joc ger” or “stir”; and a warder is a “screw.”

Of course all this knowledge of the criminal classes was not gathered by Mr. C. and myself in Providence alone, though this place afforded a liberal education in crime and misery. A district nurse visiting in a similar locality once took me to see a girl of seventeen who had a baby two days old. There was absolutely nothing in the room when the nurse arrived, and she wrapped the child up in her apron while she went to seek a few rags and food for the two unlucky mortals born into a world that had no room for them. There is nothing picturesque or romantic about life in the slums. It is an awful revelation of crime and misery such as I venture to say no “heathen” country could outrival.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE INFLUENCES OF MODERN LITERATURE—FANCIES IN FEASTS

ONLY twice during the time I have been in England have I heard sermons preached in church which dealt with the question of literature, which is perhaps one of the most important factors in influencing the minds and conduct of the present generation. And the subject of literature is a fitting one, I think, to follow the description of hooligans and thieves. I believe that more criminals and sinners are made by the influence of the books and papers which are to-day thrown into the hands of the public than almost by any other means.

The first occasion upon which I heard literature discussed from the pulpit was in a little provincial town, in a Nonconformist chapel—Baptist, I think. I had gone there with some friends. I was struck with the truth underlying the minister's utterances, although amazed at the narrowness and bigotry of a man who could condemn wholesale all novel-reading and theatre-going. His own knowledge of modern contemporary literature was confined probably to a few notices which he read from time to time in the particular religious journals he patronised. He had never entered a theatre in his life—not that I think he was much poorer for this—but he was hardly in a position to criticise dramatic art, or the dramatic profession.

The other occasion on which I heard a sermon dealing with the influence of literature was in an Anglican church in London which I had attended pretty frequently. In this case the criticism was in favour of reading good books and "keeping abreast with the times." Incidentally the preacher asked for subscriptions towards a library for a Boys' Club which had just been started. I was glad to add my humble mite, hoping much that the selection of books would be such as might be read by the boys with both pleasure and profit. I have been more than shocked with instances that have come within my own personal knowledge of the evil done by the unscrupulous and really bad "literature," shall we call it? which is flooding the market to-day.

In my student days I came across a girl whose history, I think, is one of the saddest I have ever known. At the time I knew her she was twenty-two years of age. Her mother was a worldly but practical woman, who was ambitious for this, her only daughter. She had, however, a nagging tongue, and none of the wisdom that is bred of great love. The girl was high-spirited, wilful, and intolerant of the constant badgering to which she was subjected. Her father, whom she had adored, was dead. He had been a man of considerable means, but had died without making a suitable provision for his family, or rather, he had left his property in such a way that the girl would not benefit by it till she was twenty-five years of age.

This girl began her reading with Ibsen's plays and theatrical records. At eighteen she left her home, and as she expressed it, "went on the stage"—that is to say, she joined a travelling theatrical company. She had the usual experience of such people. After a time her mother, seeing that she was determined to go on with this career, consented to send her to a dramatic school, where she studied for six months. She



naturally believed herself the equal of any actress yet seen on the boards, but she had no outstanding talent, though her aptitude for declamation and acting was considerable. She had the good fortune, after this training, to be engaged by some really first-rate managers, and she played also for some months with Mr. Benson's Shakespearian company. Then she dropped out for a little while, and during her "resting" period she fell in with one of those human sharks who go about the world seeking whom they may devour.

I have met this man several times, and he has been introduced to me afresh on each occasion because I persistently forget that I have ever met him before. Knowing what I do of him, I could not possibly bring myself to touch his hand. He is extremely good-looking, and tried to be an actor. Not succeeding, he became what he calls an "artist." He has been so spoilt and petted by women, that he could not do an honest day's work to save his life. When he met this girl, he had a wife and three children, was well fed, and a hero among the people he illuminated with his society. He was a clever talker, an infidel, of course, disguised under various pretty names—having neither religion, nor honour, nor manliness. He had, however, a beautiful head. He insinuated himself into this girl's heart. She was unaware at the time that he was married, and he began "educating" her. He supplied her with all the modern books which make a jest of things that are holy and of good repute. He gave her all Ibsen's plays and others of that ilk. One book which she continually quoted to me was "The Irrational Knot." She knew the volume, I think, almost by heart from cover to cover. Now, I have often heard Mr. Bernard Shaw speak, and have myself read, with the keenest pleasure, many of his books. I never miss an opportunity of going to see a play of his. His plays are almost the only intellectual treats one gets in a London

theatre. But I feel sure Mr. Bernard Shaw would feel desperately sorry if he knew that any of his young admirers misread his intentions, and set out alone to live in revolt against present laws. This girl lent me "The Irrational Knot," all scored and underlined by her "tutor." She was fully convinced that she was required to be an apostle, preaching the new gospel of free love. By slow degrees her excellent teacher accomplished his desire, and she went to live with him. Of her undoing and suffering and shame I cannot speak at length. She was absolutely honourable herself, and would rather starve than owe anyone a penny. She was also generous to a degree, and would share her last crust with anyone in worse plight than herself.

The man in whom she had put her trust, and to whom she gave all her love, habitually got into debt, and when pressed hard, had a neat little habit of giving cheques on his bank where he had no money to his credit: they were invariably returned with "refer to drawer." The girl was humiliated and distracted at these occurrences, which he regarded with the utmost philosophy. Any money that she earned was used for the house; he was too artistic to earn money; but his relations often sent him some, and occasionally he borrowed from friends—women mostly; who were only too pleased to accommodate him—this he spent on himself. By the time the child came, he had, of course, tired of his new plaything. Her education was complete. She believed in nothing. All responsibilities and ties were to her "irrational," she found herself an outcast; but when I knew her she still clung to her favourite literature. I think I have never seen such a collection of pernicious print in any one place. There were the novels of a degraded Anglo-Indian woman, and various French writers, and agnostic authors, huddled in delightful confusion upon her deal shelf.

The extraordinary part of the business was, that the girl, with all the trouble she had taken to smirch and mar her mind, had yet a good heart. She was refined in thought and speech, absolutely honest, but she was to me a living example of what irresponsible literature does for people of the better classes.

I know another girl, whose father is Squire in a Yorkshire country village. They have an ideal home, but the eldest daughter has made herself absolutely mad by reading bad literature, both French and English. She has so often disgraced her parents, and has such a warped mind, that they are obliged to keep a chaperon for her, who is never able to trust her out of her sight. There is nothing wrong with the girl except that she has read some hundreds of evil books, and imagines herself the heroines of them all.

The girl who was such an admirer of Mr. Bernard Shaw, and a staunch believer in the doctrine of "The Irrational Knot," was of course abandoned by her lover, and for a year, having to support the child, and not being able to obtain work, she endured a very hell. For weeks she had to live on threepence or fourpence a day, eating a pennyworth of fish from a fried fish shop with a halfpenny roll, and on Saturdays allowing herself the enormous treat of a lunch at "Lyons'," which consisted of a twopenny sandwich and a twopenny cup of coffee. She had hardly clothes enough to cover herself decently, and endured unspeakable anguish, while the man who had educated her and ruined her, lived in comfort, and succeeded in doing some work in artistic circles for which he was extolled to the skies.

Among the very poor, the chiefest literature of the lads and girls consists of the *Police News*, and those cheap halfpenny papers which give detailed accounts of all crimes and acts of violence, together with the photographs of the heroes and heroines of these exploits.

I came across a girl, who lives in a slum near Notting Dale, who has her walls plastered with prints of murderers, divorcées, and other infamous characters which have appeared in cheap papers ; and a hooligan lad of about seven years of age, with whom I became extremely friendly, confided to me that his greatest ambition in life was to get a " two stretch "—that is, a term of two years' imprisonment, " like Tom Sharp," whose picture was in several of the cheap papers which this lad had bought. It is a horrible thing to think that the press, which might be the greatest instrument for good in the land, is being used to encourage such a lad as this to a life of infamy. He is mad to secure the notoriety of having his picture produced in the papers read by his companions. I suppose it would be too much to suggest that some member of Parliament, or some women's council in the land, might take up this question, and agitate, and plead, and petition, till a law was passed forbidding the publication of the picture of any notorious evil-doer.

While I lived in the slums I had an opportunity of seeing the avidity with which even the little children seized upon the cheap illustrated papers, and hunted out pictures of criminals, or sites of places where violent deeds had been done. They gloated over these, and made games in which they impersonated the hero or heroine of some dreadful act. The pulpit too, perhaps, could be used for worse purposes than for advice and counsel upon recreative and educational reading. People must and will read, and indeed it is advisable that they should do so, but for pity's sake, let someone advise the young what they should read, and what they should avoid.



### THERE ARE OTHER EVILS, TOO, RESULTANT UPON THE DAILY PRESS

If our newspapers lived up to their vaunted ideal, which is that they desire to create a wholesome public opinion and be an influence for good in the land, they would cease to advertise from time to time the horrible gourmandising of the idle rich. They could, in actual fact, be instrumental in abolishing the senseless feasts which are constantly given in the great hotels, merely as an advertisement for some miserable snob. What useful purpose can it possibly serve to give a full description of a saturnalia given by some ill-bred American or wealthy parvenu, the cost of which works out at something like £50 a head? One such entertainment given in a leading London restaurant was chronicled in almost every paper printed in the Metropolis. Accounts of this entertainment filtered into the great provincial papers as well. At the time this particular feast was given, there were parading in the London streets thousands of wretched unemployed. During that very winter little children might have been seen any day in any thoroughfare where there were eating-shops, pressing their little bodies and cold faces against the glass behind which the food was displayed. These were little starving things whom nobody cared to feed, of whom the papers took no notice, though they fought for news of the degenerate who organised a huge advertisement for himself by giving a £2,000 dinner to light women, and others who would accept such *hospitality*. If the newspapers had refused to take any notice of this grotesque affair the man would have sat in dust and ashes, and regretted all his life, spending the money which brought him no notoriety. It is useless for the British press to rave over the misdeeds of the "smart set," while it chronicles every inane entertainment and idiotic

remark that is made by those who are rich enough to pay for the notice. It is not only one journal, unfortunately, which is guilty of this practice. Every single paper that is printed in this country encourages vice and prodigality every time it advertises the degrading exhibitions of sensuality which such entertainments undoubtedly are.

Turning from the picture of one of these dreadful feasts to the other side of the road, I may give here the story of a lady whom I will call the "Economist." I met her one evening on the outskirts of a small crowd which had gathered round the door of a well-known restaurant. The people were watching the advent of a gay party of men and women in evening dress, who had arrived in a splendid motor car. The Economist was a woman of some fifty summers, perhaps I might more fitly say winters, as it was a very shivery time of the year. She was, I guessed, either an office-cleaner or a charwoman. From her first remark to me I gathered that she did not approve of the ostentatious display of shoulders and bare arms exhibited by the ladies of the motor party, when they removed their cloaks in the vestibule of the restaurant. "Disgustin', I calls it," she said to me. "Gettin theirselves up like that, like a brazen parrit, I calls it!" I nodded my head discreetly, not liking to admit that I was unfamiliar with brazen parrots, and the lady went on: "To think, me dear, it is the likes of us that keeps the likes of them"—she viciously tugged at her bonnet-strings—"them as is goin' to gorge theirselves whilst we 'ard-workin' folks is out 'ere a-starvin'"—the lady, by the way, looked in extremely good condition. "They ought to 'ave a day or two's charin' like me an' you," she went on, "and then they would understan' the value o' the money they chucks away in them places with their five-course dinners for five bob, and sich-like." Again I nodded my head, not venturing to

inform the lady that such a thing as a five-bob dinner was unheard of at the restaurant near which we were standing. £5 would have been nearer the price or a feast; but I was there to learn, not to teach. "Eatin' money, I calls it," my new acquaintance continued, "fair chuckin' it away. Why, what they pays for their little bits of furrin muck would keep our 'ard-workin' family a week. I 'ad a brother what was a waiter, and 'e used to make us larf when 'e told us o' the goin's on in them there places, 'ow the toffs pays an' 'ow they don't know what they're eatin' of. Five courses for five bob," she went on contemptuously. "Why, I'd give you a better dinner nor they'll get for threepence, yus, and you'd get yer five courses too, if yer wanted 'em."

"Where?" I inquired, scenting an adventure.

"Over the water," she answered.

"Shall we go and get it?" I asked. "I have got a shilling or two, so can pay for both," I added.

"Can you?" she said delightedly. "Well, that's jouick, come on and I'll take yer." She led me past Charing Cross, down Parliament Street, and over Westminster Bridge, then she turned down a narrow street leading towards Lambeth. "'And us yer bob," she said, holding her hand out. I gave her a shilling. "Ah, you're one of the right sort," she was good enough to say, clutching the money. We dived deeper into this low quarter, and at length stopped outside a grimy-looking shop, the windows of which bore certain inscriptions proclaiming the fact that pea-soup was on sale at a penny, and a halfpenny a basin. "We're goin' to start our *table dotty* 'ere," my companion declared, "an' you mark me words, if I don't get yer five bloomin' courses for threepence, soop, fish, hontray, and jint, an' a sweet to finish up with, may I be blowed!" "Well," I said, "I am quite content to leave it to you." "Right yer are, come in," she said. "We'll start

'ere, and we'll begin with pea-soup." We entered the little shop, and found it unattended. However, after much strenuous thumping upon the not over-clean counter by my friend, a frowsy, middle-aged woman emerged from a door at the back of the shop. She had evidently been disturbed whilst at her toilet, for her hair was still flecked with curl-papers. "Wot's the row about?" she demanded. "Two a'porths o' mud," was the only answer my companion deigned to give. The irate soup-vendor, without so much as a remark, and without further notice, proceeded to a large tin can behind the counter and ladled into two great earthenware basins two semi-fluid portions of some queer-looking substance. She set one before each of us, with two tin tea-spoons. Then she took up the shilling which my companion threw on the counter, and gave her back elevenpence in change. My Epicurean friend ate her portion before I had tasted mine, then she kindly ate mine also. "Now we'll tike our fish course," she said. I followed her to a fried fish shop; into this she pushed her way through a crowd of children. "Two a'porths middle bits," she ordered in this place. A hot, perspiring woman, who was attending to the customers, took two bits of fish from a wire tray which hung over a pan of boiling fat, and wrapping them in two pieces of paper, handed them to us. My friend opened the parcels, and turning over the fish, snorted in disgust. "Them's 'addick."

"Well, wot do yer want for a 'apenny, brill or turbit?" asked the woman of the shop angrily. "Wot yer goin' to do, tike 'em or leave 'em?"

We took them, and paid her a penny for the two pieces. "Come along!" cried my mess-mate, after she had deluged her fish with vinegar out of a bottle that stood on the counter. The bottle was corked, but a little hole was pierced in the



cork, and through this the vinegar was dashed over the fish. "We'll eat 'em as we go along for our next bits," and this she proceeded to do rapidly, using her fingers for the purpose. For our next course she led me to another shop, on the windows of which was inscribed the legend that here was the only old-established cow-heel and tripe shop in the neighbourhood. Placards further announced that "Faggots and pease pudding" were always ready. "Here's where we'll git our hontray," remarked my guide, as she finished my fish in the same generous manner which she had displayed when helping me with my soup course. The third course consisted of a cube of curious brown stuff, presumably a food, for my companion devoured both mine and her own portions with huge relish. Complying with her order for "two pennyworth 'ot faggits," the shop-keeper cut from a large lump two portions of this stuff and handed them to her upon two pieces of paper. After we left the shop I no longer doubted the marvellous resources, and economic abilities of this gutter Epicure, still I could hardly understand how it was possible to obtain a cut from a joint for the sum of one penny each, and I expressed my misgivings on this subject. She laughed me to scorn. "Why, that's easy; 'ere we are," and she halted in front of an old woman who sat at the door of a dirty public-house, nursing upon her knee a basket, the contents of which were hidden under a white cloth. To this old woman my companion addressed herself. "Two 'apenny 'oofs!" The old lady turned down her cloth and from her basket took out two sheep's feet or trotters. "Ain't them jints?" my companion demanded, and I had to confess that they certainly were. We had now accomplished four courses and had spent on soup one penny, on the fish one penny, on the faggots twopence, and on the joints one penny. There remained only the last course, and my friend was as resourceful as ever.

She took me to a cook-shop, where she purchased two half-penny lumps of plum duff, or plum pudding. "There you are!" she cried triumphantly; "ain't I got you five courses for threepence? And it ain't been no messy foreign muck neither, but good English grub, and I proved me words, ain't I, my dear?—and—may I keep the tanner change for luck?"

## CHAPTER XIX

### IN "REAL" ENGLAND

IT is a relief to turn from such sordid pictures of lost ideals to a vision of wholesomeness and beauty. I will give here a little description of a country home such as I knew it, in contrast to the hideous jumble that life assumes in London.

As I look back to that quiet summer spent with friends in the sweet little English village in Wiltshire, I seem to live again, and to renew hope, and a belief in a better life for the unfortunates among whom, for so long a time, I sojourned. If only we could get our people away from the slums into the country places, where wholesome work would be rewarded fairly and justly, and where a man might bring up a family to serve God and the State, we might lessen the growing burden of misery which is settling upon this country like a pall.

During the months I have spent in London, going both socially and professionally into "Society," I have seen the frantic struggle that women make to attract men to their homes. The hospitality which is offered to the Lords of Creation is lavish, and every inducement is held out to them, and yet I fear that these fine ladies have not really learnt the art of attracting and winning the devotion of the best sort of men.

In the sweet country Rectory where I spent so many happy days, I found a woman who glorified life and enriched all who came within her influence. She had four sons and two

daughters, and on an income that would hardly have paid for a society woman's dress, she brought these children up, giving them every advantage of education. The boys all went to public schools, having been trained entirely by their mother, and from there three of them, while I was with her, went to Oxford. The elder girl was a friend of mine at college, and she had enjoyed the advantage of travelling and studying abroad, procured for her by her mother. It was such a home as one may fortunately meet with still in the quiet country places. The little church was across the garden, and in the summer mornings we gathered there for a simple service.

And the mother of this household—what shall I say for her? With never a dress from a fashionable dressmaker, with never any smart ways, and yet possessing such intellect and charm, such absolute holiness of life, that men from the university, friends of her sons, and lads from the public schools where the boys had been, counted among their greatest treats a visit to her home. How she thought of us all, befriended us, advised and helped us. At one time she had under her roof some eight young men, friends of her sons, university men, and all of them richer than her own boys. Young men who in town would have probably been *fêted* and made much of, who were yet supremely happy enjoying the simple hospitality of that sweet home. Fancy eight modern young men sitting down to a dinner of boiled beef and vegetables and some simple puddings, and drinking ginger beer. One learnt while in this wonderful home, that a house is a place to live in, and to be comfortable in. There was not a room in the old rectory kept for show, it was all homely and sweet and simple. There was no room where the boys might not smoke and read, or occupy themselves as they pleased. "I wish," said the dear mother, "that my children should always find their own home the most comfortable place they have been in. The carpets and curtains



are of no value to me beyond the fact that they serve their purpose ; but the comfort of my sons and daughters certainly is a matter of consideration." So we enjoyed the whole beautiful house. The great old schoolroom, which looked over the wooded grounds, was a favourite haunt of ours. Here we might make horrid experiments in chemistry, here was kept an aquarium, and various collections of beasts alive and dead. In the drawing-room, with its sweet-toned piano, which had been a wedding gift to the mother, we gathered in the evenings, and there the daughter of the house would make music for us, while the boys smoked and read.

Not once in a year, perhaps, did the dear lady of the house leave her home for "town"; she found no necessity for so doing, and yet I have not met, among all the women in this great city, anyone with a more cultivated mind or richer graces. Of all the young people whom she gathered under her roof, there was not one who did not give her affection and devotion, and we all went out into the world richer and better for having known her.

Many invitations came for the Rectory party. There was no house in all the neighbourhood where so many young men were to be found. But we were all so happy that we cared little to seek entertainment abroad.

How often in the clean, cool summer mornings I have got up before the house was astir, and stolen forth into the fields, where the daisies grew thick, and a wealth of orchis scented the air with their strange, illusive perfume. Under the great trees the mushrooms grew, and in the dewy fields the daisies, with their fresh-washed faces, looked up with inviting grace. Those lonely morning rambles made me richer by many a comforting thought. After a simple, merry breakfast, when the whole household gathered together, we strayed across the

garden to the little church. I think we all felt that life was worth living; that "God was in His heaven, and all was right with the world."

Once we all went to a garden-party given at a country house, whose owners counted their income by many thousands a year. All the people of any consequence in the county were invited, and we thoroughly enjoyed the treat. The house lay some miles away, beyond walking distance, so some of us went on bicycles, and some in an old waggonette hired from the village wheelwright. It was not at all a fashionable vehicle, but some of the young men who were able to keep their own motor cars were perfectly content with this mode of conveyance. There was the daughter of the house in a simple muslin dress and a flop hat, with a wreath of roses round it, looking like a picture. And so we all went to mingle with the gay crowd of fashionably-dressed personages, many of whom were satiated with such simple gaieties. We were able to enjoy the tennis, and wandered about the beautiful grounds without a fear of spoiling our clothes, and enjoyed every minute of the time. As we had exercised ourselves violently, we were able to do justice to the good fare provided. It was not a case of going to a late reception after a good dinner, and taking quantities of rich food merely for the sake of eating; we enjoyed the good things because we were genuinely hungry.

It is indeed because many such homes as I have described, still exist in England, and because there are hundreds of devoted mothers and faithful wives, that the country holds her own. When these cease to exist, then England's day will be done, for all those who have tasted life and touched the heart of things know that a "smart" woman's life is not worth one jot to her country.

Then turning from this lovely country life back to the

hurried town again, I must make for my readers a little picture such as is seldom described in print.

There were two dear sisters of my friend, who asked me to abide with them until I was settled in London. One was a Deaconess, a dear little, loving creature, who had spent all her life in serving and caring for others in a huge and poor parish. She always said she was not clever, but that God had given her one gift, and that was the gift of loving; and seeing her life and all that she was able to accomplish, I think that if this gift of loving were more common, the world would be richer and better. The other sister, who spent much of her life looking after poor servant girls, and controlling and managing a Home for them, was a different character altogether. She possessed a great, loving heart, but hid it under a somewhat stern exterior. True as steel, and just and generous, she was a woman who, for righteousness' sake, would have faced martyrdom. She used her strength to protect the weak. And these two dear little ladies lived in a little house in an unfashionable suburban street, devoting themselves and their incomes to the service of others. They were always ready to play the mother to the children of their married sisters and brothers, always ready in time of sickness and in need, and their little home was always sheltering those who needed their protection and care. Here, again, I saw the influence which really good women are able to exercise over men. These two ladies had both of them collections and Savings Banks for the poor women and girls in their district. These benefactions entailed an enormous amount of clerical work and accountancy. Time and again the young nephews, or their college friends, would come for the day to share the simple meals, and work hard to help the two ladies. I suppose that ultra-smart and fashionable woman would have considered them dowdy and dull; they indulged in no society

small-talk, and never knew anything of the latest scandal. Their clothes were often made by a little dressmaker who was kept in work, in home and food, by their patronage. The materials were old-fashioned and good, and everything about them was wholesome and good too. These two women had the power of attracting to themselves young men and girls for whom society might spread its allurements in vain. Dear Auntie C., how clever she was, able to discuss topics of real moment, and having travelled abroad with an intelligent perception of all she saw, she was always a most delightful companion. Then how good she was, and how unselfish. That little house radiated goodness and virtue over all that thick-peopled neighbourhood.

We may reverently thank God that all through our great cities there are such homes and such women dotted about. Their lives are entirely unknown to "Society," and yet their very breath is more precious than all the useless lives of those much-advertised individuals whom the world imagines as keeping poverty and crime at bay by their vaunted "charity"—charity which buys for the donors titles, and honours which are as dust in the eyes of honest men and women.



## CHAPTER XX

### THE CURTAIN

#### THE CONCLUSIONS OF AN "INSIDER"

THIS chapter is written with all respect and deference to those whose magnificent work among the lost tribes of Britain have made their names golden words in the land. My work has been nothing. It has only been the surveying of the land, as it were. Wiser and better people than I am must take it up, and reclaim it. One sees things, however, with altogether different eyes when one lives among people as one of themselves, and perhaps my story may be of use to others. In all these seething parishes, where I have lost myself among the thousands who swarm in the localities, I have found perhaps half-a-dozen different religious denominations struggling for the betterment of these people.

When I came to England, eight years ago, there was just beginning the public outcry about the unemployed. The Salvation Army and the Church Army have been at work many years. It is not far from twenty years ago that "General" Booth wrote his wonderful book, "Darkest England and a Way Out," which startled the world, and which travelled perhaps to every English-speaking country. He hoped, in fact I think he declared, that, given a certain sum of money he would be able to convert "Darkest England" into a realm of light. Since the book appeared that sum of

money has, I believe, been subscribed many times over, but I venture to say that if the slums he describes have some of them been wiped away, others no less hideous have taken their places, and the dwellers in these plague spots are as unlovely, as wicked, and as hopeless as those described in "Darkest England."

There are, situated in the East End of London, countless missions sending out devoted servants into the midst of these unhappy people, and yet evil is rampant among the poor, and society grows no better; indeed, so bad is it that the abuse of the smart set has become a cult. Society is reputed as wicked to-day as it was in the days of the Beauty of Bath. But even "Society" has not been neglected by the fishers of men, as witness the crusades of Father Vaughan, the writing of Mr. Bernard Shaw, the meetings held by such missionaries as Alexander and Torrey in the Albert Hall. Close upon twenty years ago Moody and Sankey, I have been told, held similar missions for the naughty West End people, and still there is no visible difference in the lives and conditions of the people, either poor or rich.

Every winter since I have been in England, the begging for the poor has grown worse. Every year since I have been here has steadily been "the worst on record." In the winter the cold is cruel, in the summer the heat is murderous.

When the Conservatives were in power they made a war, and the Liberals said it was that which nearly ruined the country, but the war has been over four years now, and there is no decrease in unemployment or in poverty.

In the face of these unhappy conditions, those who care at all for the welfare of the people, and the good of the country, will naturally bethink themselves of some reason for the failure of all these philanthropic schemes for the redemption of humanity.

It might come as a revelation to them to see their own affairs through new eyes, and there are two stories I would earnestly commend to their particular notice, stories which some philanthropist ought to have printed in penny editions, and distributed free among all the peoples of this kingdom, for their enlightenment. The stories occur in Kipling's book of "Many Inventions." The first is called "One View of the Question," and consists of the letter of a "barbarian" heathen from Northern Hindustan to a Minister in the service of the Khan of that country. It is written from the Northbrook Club, which, for the enlightenment of readers is, I may mention, located in the Imperial Institute, in the parish of South Kensington, London. One might do better than pray to the Lord that the people of this Christian land would read that letter. It is too perfect to be quoted from. I might, however, venture upon giving a few sentences from it. "Honour and stability have departed from their councils, and the knife of dissension has brought down upon their heads the flapping tent-flies of confusion. All these things," he writes, "I have seen whom they regard as a wild beast and a spectacle."

Describing the House of Parliament, he writes :

"Some of them are well-born, but the greater part are low-born, coarse-skinned, waving their arms, high-voiced, without dignity, slack in the mouth, shifty-eyed, and as I have said, swayed by the wind of a woman's cloak.

"Now this is a tale but two days old. There was a company at meat, and a high-voiced woman spoke to me, in the face of the men, of the affairs of our womankind. It was her ignorance that made each word an edged insult. Remembering this, I held my peace till she had spoken a new law as to the control of our zenanas, and all who are behind the curtain.

"Then I : 'Hast thou ever felt the life stir under thy heart or laid a little son between thy breasts, O most unhappy?' Thereto she hotly, with a haggard eye : 'No, for I am a free woman, and no servant of babes.' Then I softly : 'God deal lightly with thee, my sister, for thou art in heavier bondage than any slave, and the fuller half of the earth is hidden from thee. The first ten years of the life of a man are his mother's, and from the dusk to the dawn surely the wife may command the husband. It is a great thing to stand back in the waking hours while the men go abroad unhampered by thy hands on the bridle-rein?' Then she wondered that a heathen should speak thus : yet she is a woman honoured among these men, and openly professes that she hath no profession of faith in her mouth. Read this in the ear of the Rao Sahib, and demand how it would fare with me if I brought such a woman for his use. It were worse than that yellow desert-bred girl from Cutch, who set the girls to fighting for her own pleasure, and slipped the young prince across the mouth. Rememberest thou?"

But the document is too long and too precious for quotation to do it justice.

The other history I recommend for the enlightenment of the thoughtful British public is "The Record of Badalia Herodsfoot."

The description of the workers in Gunnison Street is an absolutely true picture of the workers in a thousand such streets in every great city of the kingdom. Mr. Kipling is a genius ; I am only a very poor recorder of such things as I have seen. I give the description of philanthropy in Gunnison Street in his own words, and pray that the Lord may put it into the minds of the people to read the story for themselves, and set about finding the means whereby these overlappings



of charity and fierce bickerings among Christians may be prevented.

"These were a mixed corps, zealous or hysterical, faint-hearted or only very wearied of battle against misery, according to their lights. The most part were consumed with small rivalries and personal jealousies, to be retailed confidentially to their own tiny cliques in the pauses between wrestling with death for the body of a moribund laundress, or scheming for further mission-grants to resole a consumptive compositor's very consumptive boots. There was a rector that lived in dread of pauperising the poor, would fain have held bazaars for fresh altar-cloths, and prayed in secret for a large new brass bird, with eyes of red glass, fondly believed to be carbuncles. There was Brother Victor, of the Order of Little Ease, who knew a great deal about altar-cloths, but kept his knowledge in the background while he strove to propitiate Mrs. Jessel, the secretary of the Tea-cup Board, who had money to dispense, but hated Rome—even though Rome would, on his honour, do no more than fill the stomach, leaving the dazed soul to the mercies of Mrs. Jessel. There were all the little sisters of the Red Diamond, daughters of the horseleech, crying 'Give' when their own charity was exhausted, and pitifully explaining to such as demanded an account of their disbursements, in return for one half-sovereign, that relief-work in a bad district can hardly be systematised on the accounts' side without expensive duplication of staff. There was the Reverend Eustace Hanna, who worked impartially with Ladies' Committees, Androgynous Leagues and Guilds, Brother Victor, and anybody else who could give him money, boots, or blankets, or that more precious help that allows itself to be directed by those who know. And all these people learned, one by one,

to consult Badalia on matters of personal character, right to relief, and hope of eventual reformation in Gunnison Street. Her answers were seldom cheering, but she possessed special knowledge and complete confidence in herself.

“ ‘I’m Gunnison Street,’ she said to the austere Mrs. Jessel. ‘I know what’s what, / do, an’ they don’t want your religion, mum, not a single— Excuse me. It’s all right when they comes to die, mum; but till they die what they wants is things to eat. The men they’ll shif’ for themselves. That’s why Nick Lapworth sez to you that ’e wants to be confirmed an’ all that. ’E won’t never lead no new life, nor ’is wife won’t get no good out o’ all the money you gives ’im. No more you can’t pauperise them as ’asn’t things to begin with. They’re bloomin’ well pauped.’ ”

Were a decent woman or a good man to go down among these miserable specimens of humanity, and for the sake of the fearful suffering they had seen endured by the children, plead with them to refrain from bringing into the world countless numbers of these diseased little ones to suffer and to starve, the whole Christian Church would rise up and denounce these two as worse than murderers. But mothers who have to work to support drunken and professionally unemployed fathers, receiving in return blows and curses, are not, I maintain, fit people to add to the population of the nation. We are supporting at the present day more lunatics, cripples, and criminals than we can afford. These people are all kept chiefly by the middle classes, and the awful result is while they breed and increase like rabbits, the women who might give wholesome and healthy children to the nation are being disqualified for maternal duties by the heavy burdens which society and philanthropy lay upon them. There are hundreds of young people who have married for love in our

great cities, who would give much to have their little homes brightened by the laughter of children, whom they might bring up to be useful and decent citizens, but the demands of modern life are so exacting that children are luxuries they cannot afford.

The poor are on their backs like the Old Man of the Sea. They may never be shaken off. The rich grab the land and own it, so that where were bred men in the country places, now are profitless lands. The fair Scotch hills may no more nourish strong sons to fight for the land they love. The Scottish Highlands are bought and reserved as shooting-grounds by rich folks from over the seas. Here is a story to show the futility of honest men trying to build up homes for themselves and their families.

My friend, Miss R., has lived all her life in a house in Albermarle Street, Piccadilly. The house was built by her grandfather, a well-known physician, who left it to his daughter, who married a literary man. They lived honest and useful lives. Her daughter, my friend, became an Art teacher and has many pupils. Her home, as she fondly considered this house, it being the only home she has ever known, is centrally situated, and she is able to support her aged mother and an orphan nephew and niece by her teaching, supplemented by rent she gets from apartments in her house which she lets off.

A little while ago she had a notice from the trustees of the "ground rents," informing her that her lease would expire within a few months. The rent of the house will then be more than doubled. My friend is herself close upon sixty years of age, and her mother is eighty-eight. Their income will not permit of their taking a really good house, so Miss R. will probably lose her pupils. In rates alone they have paid over and over again the value of the house. But they

will soon find themselves without any home, while the heir to this ground rent comes in automatically for a fine house which has not cost him a penny, nor did his ancestors work for it.

The *workers* are crushed, and the drones eat their harvests.

As I have pointed out all through this book, my experience both among the rich and the poor, convinces me that it is the idlers who are the burden and curse of society. A very curious example of this came to my notice one day, when in company with a friend I wandered down into a very poor neighbourhood in order to take some photographs.

A policeman met us and said : "You are not going down that street surely?"

"Yes," we said, "we are going to take some photographs."

"Well," he said, "I would not advise you to. Since these notices have been put up by Will Crooks and his gang, promising aid to the unemployed, we have had such a heap of trouble in this district, that we have doubled the number of constables on duty. The men hereabouts are very idle and dangerous characters. In these days, when everything is forgiven a man if he says he is unemployed, I wouldn't advise you to go about in places like this." Now, all that I know personally of Mr. Crooks is in his favour. He is a man, I should think, whom everyone must respect and honour, and he has worked hard all his life ; but from my own experience, I think that in a very large percentage of cases, the men who are unemployed remain unemployed for the simple reason that they are unemployable, and have absolutely made up their minds that they will not work. I have followed, in company with a friend, a procession of the unemployed, dressed in poor and shabby clothes myself, in order to study the ways and methods of these people. We have had some extremely amusing conversations with these applicants for public pity. Often the cases are genuine, and men have been driven



almost to the verge of desperation by suffering and hopelessness, but in other cases, loafers and hooligans of the worst description have openly boasted to us that they never had such a good time in their lives as when they went about in the processions of the unemployed, sharing the harvest of money which the public gave these people.

The condition of affairs in Poplar and these localities are only aggravated by the heavy taxes and extravagant local government. Great business firms employing hundreds of workmen are obliged, owing to the undue taxation, to remove their factories and workshops to cheaper localities. Thus the "Killing the goose that lays the golden egg" has not proved a happy expedient. In Battersea, where I have wandered about a good deal among the poor, I found a different state of things. Here, although the local rates are heavy and the Government expensive enough, a great deal of sound, practical work is done with the money spent in the borough: Mr. John Burns is not a sentimentalist. He is a very strong and practical man.

I begin to think that, instead of putting intolerable burdens on those of us who work, and taxing great industries to death, it would be better to compel men to work for the support of themselves and their families:

Any fool, of course, can find fault with existing methods. I know a lady who holds the enviable position of being dramatic critic to three newspapers. They are not first-class newspapers, it is true, but still she makes a good living out of them. She told me that she was bound to, what she called "slate" one out of every three plays or performances she saw, because her criticisms would become so monotonous otherwise, and her editors would begin to grow uneasy. Another lady I know, who is book-reader to one of the evening journals—her only qualification for the post being

that she has an uncle who is an editor, who recommended her to the proprietor of the said paper—also gave me some curious information about the way she did her work. She informed me that she was only able to read one or two books out of each batch sent to her, and always chose the one that “looked exciting.” The others, she said, she noticed with a passing word if she saw them reviewed in any papers which she happened to come across. Once in a while she would take up a book and, as she called it, “pull it to pieces”—this by way of variation and excitement. How long she held her post I am not able to say, but the art of pulling things to pieces is certainly far more common than the art of building up and putting together.

It is thus, with the greatest diffidence that I venture to make any comments on the charity or religion which has done, in spite of all disadvantages, so much for thousands of those who have needed the ministrations of both. Any man or woman who has travelled much and spent years of life in foreign lands—more especially those which are commonly called heathen—will be at once struck with the innumerable differences and dissensions among the Christians.

The vicar of a very poor parish once said to me that he would rather nothing was ever done for his people, and that they were lost body and soul, than that they should be corrupted and led into heresy. By that he meant that he would rather the thousands of souls in his great parish were absolutely neglected—for he could not possibly look after them all himself—than that any Nonconformists or workers of any other denominations should care for them or labour amongst them. It is to these small bigotries and to the constant overlapping of charity that we owe much of the evil conditions which now prevail among our people. If there was unity among Christian workers, and one whole,

determined system by which charity was distributed, much could be done, not only towards alleviating the fearful sufferings of the very poor, and also in compelling the idlers to work, but in compelling legislation which would make it impossible for idlers to live upon the earnings of others. Although it is, I believe, against the law for anyone in this country to be without a visible means of subsistence, I have never known personally of a case where a man or woman has been brought to book and questioned because of not having any definite occupation.

One other little suggestion I might put forward very humbly, and that is with regard to the work undertaken in the various clubs for women and lads and girls. Would it not be possible to have some of these, at least, open to both sexes; places where, under proper supervision and in decent surroundings, the lads and the girls could meet each other, and have an opportunity of knowing each other and doing their courting respectably, instead of being obliged to seek the streets as the only place where they might meet? This is but one of the improvements which have lately been made at our Hoxton Club. We have now a literary and debating society, and the lads and girls are able to meet and enjoy each other's company under comfortable and decent conditions.

It was, I think, at a debate on a Ladies' Night at the Hardewick Society, held at one of the Inns of Court, that I heard that clever speaker, Lady Hamilton, describe how courtship and marriage were carried on in society. I thought when listening to her, that the very rich and the very poor suffer many similar disabilities. The society girl, according to Lady Hamilton, was never allowed to meet a man except in company with her chaperon, and if some man did happen to take an interest in her, and dance with her, perhaps three or four times within a week or so, and met her perhaps in the

Park once, he was immediately called upon by her guardian to render an account of his intentions. It was her opinion that if the girls and men were allowed to meet, to talk to each other, and to have some small means of intimacy before the question of marriage was broached or thought of, that there would be far fewer cases in the divorce courts. Certainly the upper middle-class girls have in these days a thousand advantages over their richer or poorer sisters. A woman is so often robbed of one of the most delightful and useful things in life—a man's real friendship—because of the difficulties which are put in the way of an open and easy intercourse. My own life has been made so much richer and fuller by the devoted friendship of two men, and the affection and care of two of the best of women, that I feel a very sincere compassion for both girls and men who are deprived of friendship which makes for so much happiness.

For middle-class girls the clubs are comfortable and proper meeting-places for men and women. Among the poor the public-house often fills this office.

When I was serving as a barmaid in a public-house, I realised how the poor look upon the "pub" as a sort of club. It is often the only place where they have any comfort and light and warmth. If there were established in our great cities, public clubs for men and women, much of the drinking and consequent vice would be done away with.

I do not expect for this book a great popular reception, but I send it out with a growing hope that some may read it who are strong enough and wise enough to lend their influence towards the suppression of some of the more hideous evils which I have in these pages only hinted at.

THE END



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# Preliminary Announcements

For the AUTUMN of 1906.

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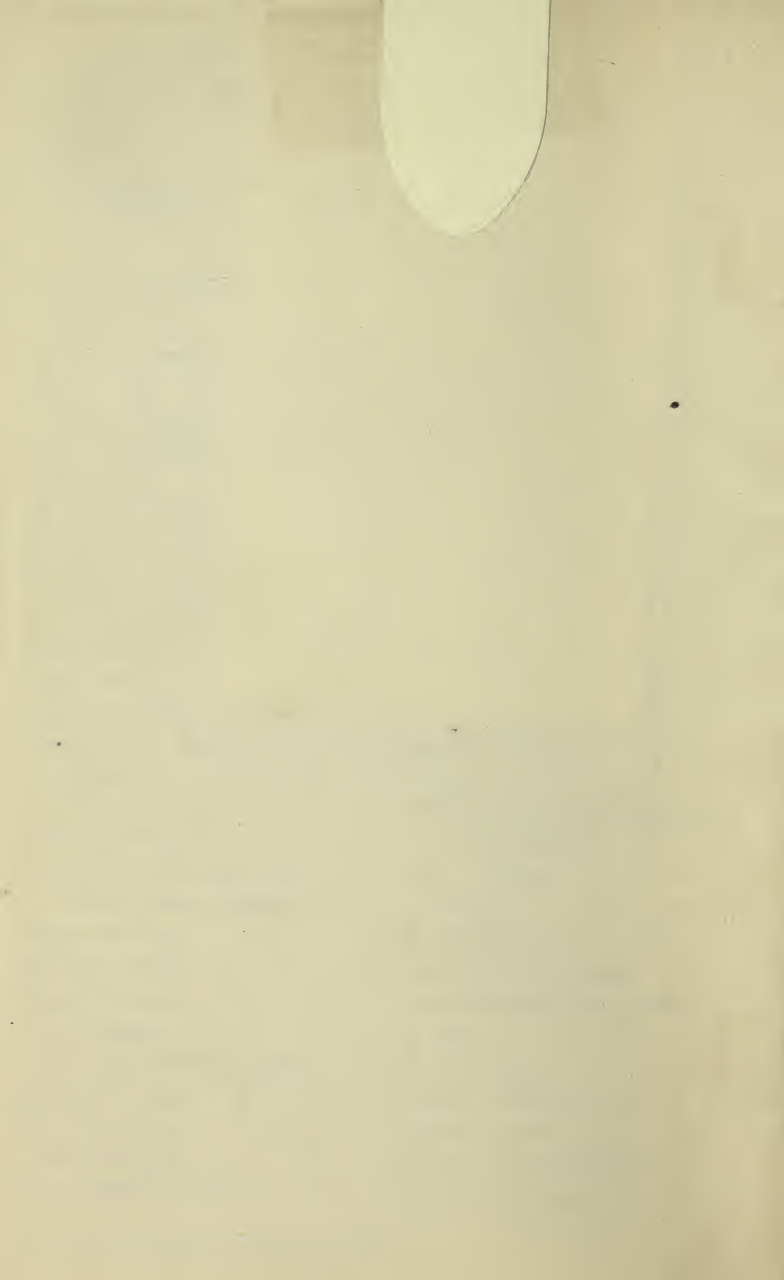
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